THE

HALL

OF

HELLINGSLEY;

A Tale.

By Sir S. E. Brydges, Bart.

&c. &c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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CHARACTERS OF THE STORY.

Lord Grey of the Wye.
Sir Ambrose Grey.
Giles Grey.
Margaret Grey.
Henry Huntley.
Sir Oliver Berkeley.
Alice Berkeley.
Geralda Berkeley.
Elfred Berkeley.
Rev. Mr. Barney.
Mrs. Barney.
Vicar of Cheeveley.
Kate the Gipsey.
Sim of the Dale.
Mr. Scudamore.
Mr. Browne.
Susan Pembury.
Hal of the Hall.
Brown Bess.
Reynold Grey.
Richard Grey.
Sir Maurice Rodney.
James Cowley.
The Curate Barker.

THE HALL OF HELLINGSLEY.

Loud and lively were the tumults of the Castle of Wolstenholme. The Lord Grey of the Wye lived surrounded by his numerous brothers and cousins. He had two children; a son and a daughter. As he was of a mild and ductile disposition, he wanted firmness to keep in order a large and refractory family of dependents.

The castle was of ancient date; spacious, and somewhat rude. An entrance under a massive gateway; two immense courts; a hall, the whole length of the division between the two courts; a chapel

of noble and rich Gothic architecture; a large retiring-room behind the hall; a long gallery; and abundance of lodging-apartments, were the principal contents of this vast pile of building.

The baronial proprietor was not wealthy: he had an extensive feudal territory; but the returns in money were not great. Yet, as very spreading demesnes surrounded him; and as chases and forests formed part of them; and as he had large herds and flocks wandering over them; his tables were plentifully supplied in an old-fashioned manner, and a large retinue lived upon him; not without some disorder and some difficulty in his finances.

He was one of the ab-original families of Anglo-Norman nobility; and retained in his own habits, and in those of all his blood, who encircled him, the pride, the hardy courage and activity; the frank, and comparatively-rude manners of these more ancient races of aristocracy.

He lived as a sort of Provincial Chief. There was but one family of equal antiquity with his in the country; and their places of residence were remote from each other; but their rivalry was inveterate. This was the family of Berkeley of Hardingville; of whom I shall hereafter have occasion to make a long mention.

Lord Grey scarcely ever went to court. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth he had for a short time held an office there; but even under her, his independent and lofty habits were ill-disposed to submit to this servitude. When he found the system of favouritism pursued by K. James, and the swarms of needy Scotchmen who engrossed all the emoluments and all the distinctions, he resolved that nothing should draw him to that sort of degrading attendance.

The only vexation he felt on this account, was the difficulty he had in providing for the ill-portioned younger brothers and cousins, and their issue, who

looked to his patronage. In the late reign, he had always retained something of influence with the court in this way; and had acquired for them his share of this sort of provision, however slender, with other great families.

Of all his brothers, he, who had the most imperious temper, and most took the lead in his household, was *Sir Ambrose Grey*, who passed at intervals long portions of the year at Wolstenholme Castle, though he had an house and establishment of his own in another part of the county.

All his portion from his father had been an annuity of fifty pounds a year. He had served at one time in the army; and had accompanied Raleigh in one of his expeditions. Whether he was rich or not; or if rich, how he acquired his wealth, nobody knew. He sometimes lived expensively, but with great irregularity; and as if caprice, rather than

want of ability, guided his occasional thrift.

Sir Ambrose was not beloved: his fierce temper made him rather dreaded. His principles were suspected; and he was not thought to be nice in the means, when he had an object at heart.

The other members of the family thought that he possessed too much sway with the chief; but were too much afraid of him to oppose him, except by intrigue or stealth.

Giles Grey, the son and heir, inherited his father's softer disposition; and therefore had not sufficient firmness to oppose this usurped dominion of the Uncle. Lord Grey had been persuaded, notwithstanding his dislike of the court, to let him pass some time with Prince Henry, who was strongly attached to him; and with whom he learned a polish of manners, and a spirit of gay gallantry and pomp, that could never have been imbibed at Wolstenholme. But he had seen,

as a set off to those pleasures, so much splendid misery; so many meannesses; so many heart-burnings; so much falsehood and treachery; so much revolting vice at court; that he was happy to return to patrimonial manners, and the rudeness of feudal independence, notwithstanding that there was much to disquiet him.

Margaret Grey, his sister, lived in this rural court, rather sullenly than contentedly. She wondered at the taste in her brother, which could willingly retire from the lively magnificence of the metropolis, to which he had been accustomed. She was something of a coquette, and very desirous of admiration; but she was not handsome.

Young men, allied or connected with the house, gave her an opportunity of exercising her charms. Among these was one, who went under the name of *Huntley*. He had passed a large portion of his time in the castle, even from his

childhood. Whence he sprung, nobody exactly knew: but he was the peculiar *protegé* of Sir Ambrose Grey; and under his wings he felt a strength, that no one dared attack. Even Margaret Grey chose to attach herself to him; to jest with him; and when he differed from her, never seriously to persevere in her opinion.

CHAP. II.

BERKELEY FAMILY.

The family of Sir Oliver Berkeley had been settled at Hardingville for at least six centuries. Their fortunes had been often fluctuating; but never till lately obscured. They had, all of them, been men of the sword: had occasionally been summoned to parliament as peers, as early as the reign of King Edward IV., and had successively gained and lost large possessions in the civil wars of the Plantagenets.

Their characters had been as various as their fortunes: the heroic, the brilliant, the rash, the mild, the virtuous, the tyrannical, the vindictive, the dissolute, the grasping, the profuse. It was curious to behold the vast as-

semblage of portraits of such of these men, as had lived since painting in this manner had been practised. The endless diversities of physiognomy and costume were highly amusing; and the rude inscriptions were documents of rare illustration. What was wanting here, was supplied by the magnificent monuments in the adjoining church. Brasses, and altar-tombs existed there in profusion; many of them executed with admirable skill. A regular series of epitaphs formed in themselves a perfect genealogy of this House.

They had been declining in wealth, since the accession of the house of Tudor. A visit made by Q. Elizabeth, in one of her progresses, to Sir John Berkeley, the father of the present knight, had, by the expence it caused, given a blow to the property, from which it never seemed likely to recover. Sir Oliver had been struggling all his life against the debt; but in vain: it at last broke the vigour

of his spirits, and the sources of his hope.

He had several children. His sons were all abroad seeking their fortunes: two of the daughters had been taken under the protection of the court. Their mother was dead; broken, probably, rather by anxiety and grief, than by a natural decay.

When a man holds the honourable inheritance of so many centuries, the least sensibility and reflection will make him regard the prospect of having it wrested from him with a horror like that of the rending his heart-strings. To aggravate this, there is, in addition to the ordinary gratification which envy receives at the fall of others, the delight and triumph which the world exhibits with every various provocation, especially in a commercial country of new men, at the ruin of an ancient and illustrious family.

Sir Oliver knew how difficult it was in those days, as in these, to rebuild an old

name. If his sons could succeed, and could cover themselves with new glory, it would have nothing of the character and colours of the past. But it is scarcely possible for old races to build anew: too many obstacles are in their way. There must be an obsequiousness in the commencement, to which they cannot bend; there must be an industry, and endurance, to which those, who have already any claims to distinction, have not a sufficient stimulus:—a cross of just pride; of indignant scorn, comes in the way; and paralises exertion, and leaves the race to the desperate.

The edifice, which formed the residence of these historical chieftains, appears to have occupied an immense site. I must describe it from written memorials; for, alas! not one stone of it now remains upon another. I have often visited the spot, and it has filled me with a melancholy, not soon erased.

There exists an old drawing of it, by

which it seems to have been something between Haddon Hall, in Derbyshire, and Penshurst, in Kent; but more like the former, than the latter. Of both these there are minute descriptions, and ground-plans, in the curious and instructive *Dissertation on Ancient Castles*, of the late Mr. Edward King, printed in the *Archaiologia* of the Antiquarian Society of London.

This mansion was once, for three years, in possession of King Edward IV. under an attainder. The amorous monarch fell so desperately in love with one of the daughters of the ejected owner, that she found the greatest difficulty to resist his importunities. There is a spot on the bank of a neigubouring river, formerly comprised within the circuit of that which once formed the park, pointed out by tradition as the scene of the following story.

At the place where a rock, covered with wood, overhangs the water perpendicularly, is the ruin of a little oratory.

Adjoining, is the withered trunk of an ancient oak, called *Bertha's Bower*. Bertha is said to have been the same, who was the object of the king's passion. Edward pursued her hither, and in the hurry of her flight, she was precipitated into the river, and drowned.

The common people are full of superstitious stories, in all of which she is supposed still to haunt the spot; and among the MS. notices which still remain of this family, is the following *Inscription*, said to have been once affixed either to the oak, or to the wall of the oratory:

INSCRIPTION

Come hither, Chaste of heart, and Pure of form!
Come, when the young Moon with the vapoury veil
Of Twilight is contending! Thou shalt see
A Spirit ride on yonder swelling wave;
A star upon her forehead, and a vest
Of brilliant emerald on her shoulder flung.
The water with a murmuring lapse shall flow;
And the light breeze, with a melodious sigh,
Shall waft fresh perfumes: then aerial notes
Of rapturing music shall your ear entrance:
Hark! and the words shall thrill your glowing breasts.
" Joy to you, Waves of mercy! Thus I bathe,

At the due hour, in bliss : and Nature thus
Soothes with her finest symphonies, my soul,
That for a moment takes its mortal frame !
Though freed, it lingers here : in yonder bowers
It fed a love celestial : not a stain
Could touch its purity ; and when the dart
Of fire demoniac strove to injure it,
These covering waves spread their protecting wings,
Then gave it up in triumph to the sky !"

CHAP. III.

ALICE BERKELEY. — THE RECTORY. — HELLINGSLEY HALL.

Alice Berkeley, the youngest daughter of Sir Oliver, had been principally educated by her aunt, Mrs. Barney, the wife of a rector, moderately preferred, who resided in a solitary parsonage in this county, on the borders of a forest. Mrs. Barney was the sister of Sir Oliver Berkeley; and was considered by the family to have made a very inferior alliance. As time rolled on, and unexpected events came with its passage, she, who had been neglected because she was thought to have degraded the family, became one of its stays. She was a woman of good sense, softened by the comparative humility of her station; be-

nevolent, friendly, attached to her house, a little vain of her birth, but reconciled to her plainer habits of life, and remoteness from society.

Mr. Barney had a character suitable to his profession; was plain, simple, correct, mild; hale in constitution, cheerful in temper; but neither by nature nor study, of superior intellect, or superior acquirements.

They had no children; and Alice Berkeley, who had lost her mother soon after her birth, was committed to their care before she was three years old, and was the object of their fondest affection.

Their nearest neighbour was another clergyman, with whom they were on terms of great intimacy. This gentleman had assigned to him part of the education of young *Huntley*, who has been noticed in the first chapter as one of the numerous persons forming the usual company of Wolstenholme Castle.

Huntley was placed here by Sir Ambrose Grey, who had taken upon him-

self the trust and support of this boy. It was in the neighbourhood of the *Hall of Hellingsley*, which was Sir Ambrose's property, and where he resided part of the year.

Three years had elapsed since Huntley had quitted his tutor; and various circumstances had occurred during that time to prevent his paying him a visit. In the autumn, which was the commencement of the fourth year, he, with some difficulty, obtained leave to pay this long-wished visit. Mr. Rainsford had not been like a common preceptor to him; he had loved him as a son; and Huntley had considered the vicarage of Cheeveley almost as his home.

When he returned to this spot, his recollections at first almost overpowered him. He had a nature of high sensibility; but the air and habits of Wolstenholme were not favourable to it. Among his faults, was too much pliancy to the characters of those with whom he associated. He

lived at Wolstenholme among soldiers, sportsmen, men of a sort of hard chivalry; boon companions, roarers, jesters, men who pretended to have seen the world. Literature was not the tone of the society; they knew nothing of it, and they endeavoured to laugh it out of countenance.

As soon as he re-entered on these haunts of his childhood, it seemed as if the buried ideas started almost simultaneously into full light, like a picture, whence a curtain is suddenly withdrawn. The intensity of his sensations for some days almost overcame and exhausted him. All the scenery was full of the most delightful recollections; Rainsford's taste and mode, as well of spending his own time as of instructing his pupil, had peculiarly nurtured this sort of association. He had gradually brought himself to extinguish it when at Wolstenholme; but when it revived, the pleasure was so acute that he was astonished,

and filled with regret at what he had done. It is true, that this state of sensation is only consistent with a very high degree of virtue; he who accustoms himself to a coarser mode of thinking and acting, will not bear the disturbance of these combinations.

At a little distance from Cheeveley lay, in a valley, the *Hall of Hellingsley*. It was an old-fashioned manor-house, placed at the end of a village,—not, however, joined to it. It had been a purchase of Sir Ambrose Grey, more than thirty years past. Here he kept his horses and his hounds; and a large establishment of the class of servants attached to them. He was reckoned the best sportsman, the best rider, and the best hawker, in all the country. Athletic, intrepid, full of animal spirits, he went through incredible fatigues of body, and surmounted precipices and other perils, by his skill and knowledge of the country, which left all competitors behind him.

He was single; but it was said that he had a race of irregular posterity scattered about the neighbourhood. His companions were for the most part men who indulged in intemperate joviality; and there was too much reason to credit the report that his house was the scene of dissolute orgies.

The clergy spoke of his character with disapprobation; but he was too powerful to be very loudly and openly condemned.

Though Huntley had been placed at Cheeveley by Sir Ambrose himself, and though he was brought into the Castle of Wolstenholme by Sir Ambrose's hand, yet, from some cause unknown to him, he was never admitted as an inmate or visitor of the Hall of Hellingsley. His tutor, Rainsford, was always most watchful that he should not break this rule; and impressed upon him that the favour of Sir Ambrose depended on a strict adherence to it. He had never, therefore,

approached the gate or walled confines of this interdicted mansion; and only beheld it mysteriously from the garden of Cheeveley, which looked down upon it, at the distance of two miles.

He could not be prohibited from occasional walks to the village; but he always entered at the other end, and turned off when he had proceeded a little more than half way, by a path that led home again. At this opposite entrance stood the house of Mr. Scudamore, a gentleman whom Mr. Rainsford visited, and to whom he often carried Huntley with him. This house was placed upon an eminence (for the village stood upon a long descent); and the windows of one front looked down upon the Hall almost hid in a thick grove of ancient trees.

When Huntley, in one of his first morning walks from Cheeveley, revisited this spot, he felt the habitual awe that had been impressed upon him from boyhood, and overstepped not the limits that had

always been prescribed to him. Yet when he recollected what his subsequent familiarity with Sir Ambrose Grey at Wolstenholme had taught him, his curiosity and wonder were much increased.

His mind was at this time in a very fervid state; his fancy had taken new life, and his heart was swelling with a thousand new emotions. In this state, he stopped one afternoon at the close of a long ramble, at the parsonage of Mr. Barney. He had already paid him two morning visits; and had been received with gentle cordiality.

He glided up the court; a light wind was rustling the yellow leaves from the row of chestnut trees that stood before the windows; the house-door was a-jar; he tapped at the door of the little parlour. A melodious voice was reading aloud a canto of *The Fairy Queen.* He entered: Mr. and Mrs. Barney rose and welcomed him: the third figure looked

confused, blushed, and was silent. It was *Alice Berkeley.*

Huntley had not seen her at either of his former visits. When he quitted Cheeveley, three years before, she was almost a child. She had been sometimes his play-fellow: but the difference of age, and difference of amusements at that time, did not throw them much together. The dusk of evening was hastening on; but he yet could perceive what a wonderful bloom three years had given to her person. He spoke to her: she answered with timidity and reserve. She had been absent at Hardingville part of the time that he was at Wolstenholme: he would have talked to her about it; but he was fearful of her jealousy of the prejudices existing between the Houses of Berkeley and Grey.

He could dwell with less dread of offence on the surrounding scenery, so familiar to the childhood of both. He described the appearances which had de-

lighted him in the walk of the afternoon. Alice listened: he was eloquent in his expressions, and happy in the tones of his voice. His delineations were at once glowing and faithful. Alice said to herself, "These scenes have struck me in exactly the same way: but I could not, before, tell why."

Huntley took leave. He came out of the house pensive: he sauntered with slow pace to Cheeveley. He reflected, with a sort of magic interest, on this visit: all night the image of Alice Berkeley was before him: in the morning he resolved to seek her again.

He was surprised that he could have lived near her for so many years, and have beheld her with indifference: he forgot the change in his own age and person, as well as in hers.

After breakfast of the following day, he bent his course in the direction of the parsonage. Though it was late in October, the whole heaven was an expanse

of serene sunshine. The brilliance was increased by the dews which had yet been scarcely exhaled. Before him were vast masses of forest-shade; green, and yellow, and gold: to his right, below a slope of mingled pastures, and corn-fields, and wood, lay Hellingsley in the bottom; beyond it rose again a long elevation of hill, clad with brushwood, now tinged with the pale tints of the decaying year: to the left the ground fell again into a vast plain, which spread for nearly thirty miles to the very walls of the capital of the county.

The joy and glow of heart which these noble landscapes, on this beautiful day, inspired, made his bosom expand with gratitude for the gift of existence. As he approached the Parsonage, whose white chimnies, and antique roof covered with ivy, glittered with the rays that sat upon them, his breast began to palpitate. The path led him across a lane, separated by two stiles: he had

leaped over the first, and was mounting the second, when, at the other end of the meadow, a female figure was advancing towards him: a few steps before her, the path separated into two: she instantly, as if perceiving him, struck into the path which diverged to the left, and soon vanished behind a tuft of wood, through which the path ran.

Huntley, who suspected the figure to be that of Alice Berkeley, aware that this path would soon cross another, which led back by a close lane to the Parsonage, hastened forward to the top of that lane.

He was right; he there met Alice, who could not escape from him. He addressed her with embarrassed politeness; she received him with extreme timidity; yet with that grace which her native elegance, the sense she had of her birth, and the unextinguished polish of her father's manners, had impressed upon her.

He accompanied her homeward; he

endeavoured to excite her interest, by recalling the incidents of their childhood; he expressed with delicate felicity the admiration he felt at her extraordinary beauty, which had come into bloom since their separation; and he expressed such unaffected delight at the renewal of their acquaintance, that Alice could not misunderstand how powerfully she had won his notice.

He took leave of her without approaching the house. Prudence whispered to him, that too sudden and too frequent an intrusion into this house would be a sort of impolicy that he might hereafter have occasion to repent of.

CHAP. IV.

VISIT TO MR. SCUDAMORE. — SUPERNATURAL NIGHT NOISES AT HELLINGSLEY.

HUNTLEY, the next day, called on Mr. Scudamore. There he learned that Alice Berkeley was engaged to dine, and spend a few days with him in the following week. By a little management he contrived to procure an invitation for himself.

Mr. Scudamore, a younger brother of a good family, had, for the greater part of his life, filled some office in the exchequer. At the latter part of his days, a distant relation had bequeathed to him this seat, with a competent property annexed to it. A man of the gown, brought up to a sedentary occupation, his manners and habits were not at all

consonant to those of Sir Ambrose Grey: each had a great dislike to the other. Mr. Scudamore's family, though not so illustrious as that of Sir Ambrose, was scarcely less ancient: and he had nearly as much pride of ancestry. He was a man not without understanding; but his talents were slow and formal: the routine of office had made him precise; and his information was minute, and correct, but narrow and prejudiced.

He was friendly, and well-principled; but somewhat languid, and cold in his feelings.

He had a sister, and her daughter, who lived with him; and every thing in his house was conducted with order and comfort.

Huntley was impatient for the arrival of the day, when he was to take advantage of the invitation to this house, to enjoy another interview with Alice Berkeley. The expected hour came: the

party was assembled. He was received with politeness.

He looked at Alice; but he saw nothing in her countenance but unaffected beauty, and unassuming simplicity. She spoke to him with a sweet smile, as to one whom she had known for many years; yet with an apprehensive modesty as to a revived acquaintance, new beyond the days of childhood, except during the two short interviews of the former week, in which Huntley had drank of the delirious cup of passionate love.

The dinner-table broke the formality of the conversation; and Huntley was placed by the side of Alice. Animated by her presence, beholding her beauty with increasing admiration, he put forth all the best powers of his mind to recommend himself. He was gifted with a great command of language; and he was particularly versed in historical anecdote, especially relative to the feudal manners of England. This he had especially ac-

quired at Wolstenholme; for though there were few readers there, the castle had a good library of historical and antiquarian books.

All have their vanities: Huntley guessed what would please the treasured bent of Alice's mind. He had too much judgment to mention by name the families either of Berkeley, or of Grey: but the whole tendency of what he said, was to exalt the feudal houses of nobility, to justify their pretensions; to soothe them under misfortunes; to prove that they had a spirit which could not be extinguished by depression.

Alice for some time listened, but joined not in the conversation. She had scarcely leisure to reflect what a change three short years had made in his turn of mind; his language, manner, and tones of voice. She recollected the wild boy, always occupied in field amusements; more filled with animal spirits than with sentiment, and too much satisfied with

reality to wander into regions of imagination.

She had expected that, when he came back from Wolstenholme, he would have been more confirmed in these habits. Her hereditary prejudices were all inimical to Wolstenholme: thence she hoped nothing good; thence she feared every indisposition towards the Berkeleys.

Perhaps the very surprise of meeting with every thing in the manners and opinions of Huntley contrary to her unfavourable anticipations, greatly increased the interest and pleasure she now felt in his company.

Mr. Scudamore, his sister, and her daughter, were all well calculated to set off the lively and energetic tone of Huntley's conversation. Scudamore's cold and laboured precision, his sister's economical prosing; his niece's ill-founded vanity, and ridiculous coquetry, formed contrasts to him so very striking, and made the attractive *naivetè* of Alice at

the same time so doubly enchanting, that each from these causes became still more delighted with the other. Instantaneously each saw into the other's mind; and each saw that they could not be understood by the puppets who were in their company.

Mr. Scudamore, having spent the vigour of his life in the metropolis, had no genuine pleasure in the amusements of a country residence; and was insensible to the varying appearances of the scenery of nature. It might indeed be said, that he

—— "in trim gardens took his pleasure:"

he trod the due number of times his gravel walks; rambled among his parterres, and admired his clipped yew allies. But he seldom strolled beyond them. He looked down with wonder, pity, and shrugs of the shoulder, upon the hall of Sir Ambrose Grey. He exclaimed at his rough and barbarous occupations; and, what he called, barbarous manners.

When the shades of evening closed in upon them, he knew not what it was to behold wistfully from his windows, the last golden rays of the sun sink behind the rising masses of the western forests. He was insensible to that sort of pleasure which arises from the diversity between the darkness without, and the cheerful lights of society within: those pleasures which are so beautifully contrasted and illustrated in so many parts of *Cowper's Task*.

In addressing himself to Scudamore, Huntley had an opportunity of exhibiting those sentiments regarding nature, which have a greater effect on those for whose ear they are intended, when apparently directed to others. He had thus an opportunity of conveying, in the most delicate manner, to Alice, his sense of delight in all those scenes, in which he had been associated with her, from their childish years. Scudamore stared at the vivacity of his descriptions: as there was

too much earnestness and fluency in his words and tones to raise the suspicion of affectation, he began to suppose that Huntley was gifted with other senses than his. He had never seen the appearances described by Huntley; he could not imagine the charms which Huntley had discovered; he could see nothing in Cheeveley, or in Barney's Parsonage, so associated with impressions of smiling happiness. He interposed his stories of the thronged streets of London, with such a sapient solemnity of manner, with such a technical dryness of remark, that the arch good-humour, the sagacious vivacity, with which Huntley received and answered it, added to the poignancy of his own pictures; and lifted his talents, and his disposition, still higher in the opinion of Alice.

Miss Jenkins, the niece, joined in these conversations, with more than her usual pertness and conceit. She knew that Alice had never been in London; and

she thought it a good opportunity to show her own superiority. This awkward attempt, like that of her uncle, called forth the gentle and complacent smiles both of Huntley and Alice.

No person, perhaps, of high sensibility, and high mental cultivation, ever lived to the age of twenty, without experiencing some one day of which the impressions are such, as nothing of the past, and nothing of the future of their lives resemble. Such was the state of Alice's emotions on this day.

As the evening advanced, she regretted the swift passage of time. But at length her spirits became exhausted, and she was glad of the summons to retire to her room. Miss Jenkins showed her to her apartment; and, exhausted by her own attempts to make a conquest, left her to herself.

Her mind was too much occupied to permit her to undress; and she sat an hour by the window, lost in meditation.

This window overlooked the fall of the village, and extended the view to the hanging and wooded slope of the forest, a mile or two beyond it. It was a stormy night; and though it was moonlight, the rays only broke by fits, and with difficulty, through the driving clouds. Something like the distant sound of the wheels of a ponderous waggon, and the tinkling bells of horses drawing it, seemed to come interruptedly from the forest-road. She listened, and looked, and saw a slowly-moving light, as of a lanthorn, such as these travelling-carriages use in the dark.

Presently Alice heard a suppressed and muffled tolling, as from the church-steeple. It paused; and in about ten minutes was renewed; and then ceased. Along the windows of the distant *Hall*, hurried flashes, sometimes from one part, and sometimes from another, as if from rapid movements within, caught her notice. Then came a sound, like the fall

and uplifting again of the drawbridge; and, anon, the distant and dying trample of horsemen. This was followed by a dead silence, interrupted only by the gusts of wind, and the groans which the eddying blast made among the trees, and round the corners of the house.

At last, something like the melodious and solemn chant of a human voice, was heard floating on the air, during a pause of the gust. Alice listened in awful consternation. It came nearer. She listened again. She could catch no intelligible combination of words. At length she distinguished the following stanza:

> "Steeple bells untouched are tolling;
> Bays the dog, when none are nigh:
> While the thunder slow is rolling,
> Witches hurtle in the sky."

Shrieks and yells were soon afterwards heard in the forest, and then, after another pause of a quarter of an hour, a distant tread of a number of horsemen,

moving as if in troops, but passing as in opposite directions; yet without appearing to come in conflict, though she could clearly distinguish the rattle of swords and armour.

An hundred lights again gleamed along all the windows of the Hall; and again the clang of the drawbridge, let down and instantly pulled up, struck her ear. At this moment another motion of horsemen in full gallop passed up the village, as if departing from the forest, and taking their way by the outward portal of the Hall; while the dogs of the mansion bayed at them as strangers, and the porter blew his horn as if in alarm.

Breathless and mysterious curiosity had hitherto kept Alice in possession of her faculties. She now fainted with terror; and after her revival, scarce knowing where she was, threw herself on her bed; and wrapping herself up, lay bewildered, half-slumbering, half-dreaming, intermixed with frightful fits of waking

reflection, till the dawn of day. At these moments she resolved to take the earliest opportunity to quit a village and a house beset with such awful visitations.

She looked with some hesitation and doubt to the protection of Huntley. She resolved to question him regarding these extraordinary appearances; and yet an indefinable fear made her doubt whether it was a subject on which he could bear to be examined.

She found, that, even amid the agitations, his manner and person, as they were impressed upon her from the past day, had won upon her strangely; and she felt sick at the idea of any thing which might make her displeasing to him.

CHAP. V.

GYPSEY FORTUNE-TELLER.

Alice was relieved, and pleased, when the summons to breakfast arrived. When she entered the parlour, Huntley was already there. She looked pale; but perhaps more interesting by her paleness. Her eyes had a sort of veiled lustre, which added to their effect. Her voice was still more tender; and the fluctuations arising from the yet-unsubsided emotions of her spirits, gave still more variety to her naturally interesting appearance.

Huntley addressed her with softness, intermixed with more of doubt than he had shown on the preceding day. She thought, as if he knew something in the

night, yet rather dreaded than wished an allusion to it. When it was remarked that the night had been stormy, he coldly assented; then turned to another subject. Something of the gossip of Miss Jenkins, which seemed to lead to the subject of supernatural agencies, he suppressed by a sarcastic joke.

Alice and Huntley were looking out of the window, when, up the court, came a gypsey-woman, with her basket of pedlary.

"Oh," said Alice, "that is a fortune-teller: I will have my fortune told."

Huntley looked grave.

"Do not be so silly, Miss Berkeley," he replied.

Alice coloured, and with difficulty suppressed a tear; but, being somewhat piqued, she affected to turn it off in a tone of liveliness; and charging him to leave her to herself, ran to the door.

"No, no; Miss Berkeley!" he cried, "that gypsey is a cunning woman;

and I am resolved you shall not have your whim, unless you suffer me to be present to protect you!"

"A wise, and skilful, and bold protector!— are you not?" she said with an affected spirit of archness.

The woman approached the window. Her locks, black as raven's, hung dishevelled upon her shoulders. Under their shade, appeared a face of features, sharp, regular, and even beautiful; with fierce eyes of the darkest hue, and a complexion as yellow as walnut. She was young, and probably had not reached her thirtieth year. Her form was somewhat of the larger size; yet well shaped, round, and even majestic. She addressed Alice in a tone between supplication and command. "Sweet young lady, will you buy any of my goods? Here are ballads, and songs, and romances, and posies, and love-knots, and ribbons, and trinkets, in plenty." There was a freedom in this address, that made

Alice already repent of her whim. Her cheek was covered with blushes; and she would have ran up stairs to avoid the raillery of Huntley, if she had dared.

The gypsey saw at once her embarrassment, and betrayed by a leering eye her triumph at the prey, round which she supposed she had drawn her net. Huntley gave this woman a frown.

"Bless your honour's brave face," said she; "I would not tell the sweet creature a bad fortune, or make her lovely face, that your worship delights to look upon, pale with fright, for all the gold that both of you can command. Come, open that delicate hand, sweet creature of a better world, and I will tell you what shall put glee in your eye, and make your heart dance, like the moonbeam upon the sea."

"Indeed, good woman," eagerly exclaimed Alice, "I do not want to have my fortune told;" and she threw down a piece of money, in the hope of satisfy-

ing her. But *Kate*, (for by that name she was known), was not so easily to be got rid of. She ran on with a volubility that made Alice ready to sink at the fear of every succeeding word. Huntley also would now have willingly put an end to it; and thought the shortest way was to let Kate tell Alice's fortune at once.

He himself took gently hold of Alice's white hand, and endeavoured to open it to Kate's inspection. Alice struggled, and almost intreated; its pulses beat; its soft trepidation shot dangerous poison through the frame of Huntley.

" Bless thee again, sweet lady; and a thousand times bless thy pretty hand, and thy pretty cheeks," said Kate with a solemn vehemence. " I would as soon hurt my own beloved bairn as hurt such a tender fair dove as thou art, or affront his honour, that prays you to hear what I have to say."

Huntley frowned; and as Alice caught his look, a horrible suspicion crossed her

that he knew the gypsey already too well. She withdrew her hand from him, and almost shrieked. Huntley took up the conversation. He endeavoured to draw her attention to the contents of the woman's basket; and seizing on a bundle of ballads, and some of those penny romances, which now, whenever they are recovered from the wreck of time, are bought at the price of a guinea a page, gave Alice an opportunity to recover from her consternation.

Kate was yet resolved not to quit her hold upon Alice.

"Didst thou hear the storm last night, pretty lady?" continued she: "the wind blew, and the bell tolled, and mighty doings there were among the hags of night, sure enough. — And then there was the Song Spirit, that floats in music upon the clouds, and comes sailing by the ear like the chant of choristers at a midnight vesper. — Why, I heard it as plain as I now hear my own voice:

and I fear it — ah, I fear it no more than I fear that sweet face of yours, beautiful lady. Ah, that soft face! who fears it? unless his honour there, whose brave eyes pay obeisance to it with so much earnestness!"

"The storm was rude enough," said Huntley; "but I hope it did not disturb you, Miss Berkeley!"

"A good deal, I confess," answered Alice, faintly and tremulously; then, having paused a moment, and turning her eyes on Huntley, she continued: "but was it nothing but a storm?"

Huntley turned pale.

"You hear," cried he, "what the gypsey says. And remember, Miss Berkeley, it was you who was first anxious to consult her."

"And am I not punished for my curiosity?" she exclaimed, with something of reproachful tenderness. "I shall begin to think," she added, with a sort of mournful smile, "that there are, in-

deed, supernatural beings, who are allowed to haunt us in this earthly state; and, what is more, that you and this good woman have, both of you, some communication with them!"

Kate shook her black locks, and bit her lips, and began to mutter; when Huntley cried in an imperious tone:

"Have done your hobgoblery, woman, or ——"

"Threats *to me*," interrupted Kate, "threats *to me*, Squire *What's-your-name!* Did I ever harm you or yours? Have I offered harm or affront to the young lady, bless her sweet eyes? No; Squire Huntley, none of your threats *to me*, lest curses and imprecations light upon you, and your love prove fruitless, and your inheritance a stone, and your honours a blot, and your end obscurity and disgrace! — Look at me, proud Squire!" throwing back her sable tresses, and darting forth all the terror of her fierce eyes, and stamping with her strong

foot, and beating her full bosom with her powerful hand; — "Look at me, and say if I am to be taunted and commanded as an hag of mischief; an outcast, whom the bloody constable drives from society! — but —" softening her tone, and relaxing into an half smile, "I know, Squire Huntley, you are not that cruel sort of man; you are frank, and gracious, and manly; ay, and handsome into the bargain; and would not treat a fellow-creature like a worm, and a brute, because she happens to have no covering but these tattered garments, and no roof but the canopy of Heaven. Thou dost not, like the silken sons of scorn, and pride, and tyranny, prefer an effeminate court to a country castle; and the gardens of palaces to the forest full of beasts of the chase. — *Spoils* are better than a king's pay, 'Squire Huntley: *you know that as well as I do.* — Yes; look at me once more, Harry Huntley, and see if the blood does not circulate in these veins as

kindly; if I do not feel love, and good-will; and gratitude, and hatred, and scorn, and indignation, as keenly as these white-feathered, yellow-booted, slash-doubleted, velvet-cloaked, silver-trimmed gentry and their minxes, who turn up their silly noses, and would throw me from them as a pest!

"Do I not enjoy all that is most valuable of what they enjoy? Am I not a free denizen of the fields, and the woods, and the sun, and the skies?"

Alice, half-trembling, smiled at this extraordinary burst of something like poetical enthusiasm. The penetration of Kate saw the complacence of that smile.

"Gentle and beautiful young lady," she went on, "you turn a soft ear to this rant, as it is called, of poor Kate. — Blessings on that blooming face! May that tender bosom never be strained to falsehood and hardness! May those lily-white fingers receive the ring of fidelity, honour, and courage! May the

tear trickle down thy cheek, only for the sorrows of others; and that budding bosom never know griefs of its own! May the Night Spirit haunt your dreams with delicious music; and the horsemen of the air, that disturb the clouds with their invisible combats, hover round you in the bellowing tempest, and guard your beauty and your virtue against every recreant knight!" ——.

"Why, Kate," cried Huntley, "you seem to have some acquaintance with those airy personages, of whose noises we hear so much in the village of Hellingsley. Perhaps you are one of the witches, that, in the bustle of the elements, ride through the sky on a broomstick, and toll the bells, and carry lights through the forest, and glimmer along the lanes, and raise the clatter of swords, and put the windows of the old *hall-house* in a blaze." ——

"Sport not with matters beyond your ken, Squire Huntley!" Kate exclaimed,

in a stern tone: "there is a time, and a place, and a business for all. Leave me to my doings, and ye may not repent it! —Cross me, and the Evil One may be about you, ere you may be aware!"

Alice shuddered, and casting her eyes on Huntley, saw him also apparently tremble. They each threw a piece of gold into the gypsey's basket, and were departing from the window, when Kate, with a manner both awful and majestic, took leave, saying:

"Fare you well, lovely ones! May God be with you till another day!"

CHAP. VI.

GYPSIES IN THE FOREST.

ALICE ran to her own room to meditate on what had passed. Between the emotions of her heart and the involuntary operations of her fancy, she felt herself so bewildered, that every thing continued for above an hour, more like the confusion of a dream than sober thinking. There was a wonderful mixture of mysterious delight in her sensations; but there was also a great deal of fear and anxiety. Superstition was at this era powerful in its influence, even over the best-informed. It could hardly be expected that a girl of Alice's age should be unappalled by the mysterious eloquence of Kate; more especially when aided by the strange events of the pre-

ceding night. The flattery pronounced by this strange being, clothed in words so far above her station, and so full of energy, and of that sort of impression most congenial to her heart, operated like a kind of magic, which thrilled through her whole frame.

On the other hand, there were occasional looks of the gypsey, and occasional threats to Huntley, which filled her with indefinable doubt and alarm. It sometimes crossed her, that there was not wanting even a leering licentious look, mixed with these threats. But it was the carelessness with which Kate talked of the late supernatural appearances, and the unaccountable reserve kept by Huntley while she talked on that subject, that formed the strongest ingredient of Alice's fear.

During this period, she saw from her window, Huntley pacing up and down the court, traversing up and down the lawn, and wandering round the house, in apparent uneasiness. A sort of impulse,

which she could not resist, brought her down stairs. Huntley caught the glimpse of her figure, and returned eagerly in doors. Used as he was to innocent familiarities during their childhood, he seized her hand on approaching her, and kissed it—yet, with a violence that alarmed her delicacy, and suffused her cheeks with blushes. She drew it away with something like anger, and Huntley made an awkward apology, in which he vainly endeavoured to disguise his agitation under affected liveliness.

Alice took up a book, but knew not one word that she read. Huntley gazed vacantly at the window, till he could recover his self-possession. At length the book dropped from her hand, and the sound of its fall roused him from his reverie. He sprang forward and picked it up; but insisted on satisfying his curiosity before he returned it. It was *England's Helicon;* a miscellaneous collection of poetry, printed in 1600. It

opened at that simple and beautiful song of Kit Marlow:

"Come, live with me; and be my love."

He asked Alice, if she was not delighted with the words; she pretended not to know them. He read them to her with an emphasis which forced her to acknowledge that they were indeed exquisite poetry.

"Ah, but Alice," said he, "(I must again call you *Alice*, as I did in our childhood,) are they not more than poetry, Alice? Are they not true?"

"Is poetry then in general false?" answered Alice.

"Not, perhaps, good poetry," he replied; "not, at least, false in the better sense; — true in spirit, if not in fact: and not only possible, but probable, in its events. — But *here* is nothing but sentiment and description, which are true as the light of the sun, and the

perfume of flowers, and the freshness of waters, and the shade of trees. True, as Nature is more enchanting than Art, and Love more delightful than Wealth and Luxury."

Huntley was winding himself with a good deal of management into a delicate subject; and Alice, perceiving at once whither he was leading her, turned the conversation into a different channel. She asked him for some account of Wolstenholme Castle; and the manner in which he had spent his time there, since their separation. He gave her a lively sketch of the manners and characters which that castle exhibited. He gave it, however, with not a little candour and forbearance towards the persons described. He did not think it right to feed, even in Alice, the hereditary animosity between the Berkeleys and the Greys of Wye. He owed too much to his benefactors; and he thought that it would be a degradation to his own pride. The per-

son, about whom she asked the most shy and uneasy questions, was Margaret Grey. On this subject she seemed almost angry that Huntley would tell her scarcely any thing.

The remainder of the day was languid and flat. Their spirits had been quite exhausted; and Alice was pale, silent, and absent.

The following morning, the bloom of her cheeks returned. Never was a more serene and mellow autumnal day. Huntley challenged Alice to a walk in the forest; and after a little hesitation she accepted it. They went down the village; passed between the parish church, and the castellated portal of the hall; ascended up the steep-wooded slope of the forest, which backs or rather crosses the village, at the distance of half a mile; and having surmounted the ridge, strolled among some of the wildest dingles of that romantic domain. Scarce a sound was heard, but the rustle of the deer issuing from the brakes, or the thickets. The human

voice, or even human footstep, seemed here to be almost unknown. Huntley began now to suspect he might lose his track; and was somewhat solicitously pursuing back his course, when two human figures were seen on the brow of the dingle, from which they were returning.

Huntley felt the arm of Alice tremble in its grasp; and when he spoke to her, her voice faltered, and she looked pallid as death. The figures moved not from the spot; but seemed deep in conversation, and violent in gestures. Huntley knew that fear would not avail; and that attempt at avoidance would only increase danger. As they approached, the tattered dress of these persons bespoke them to be some of the vagrants who infested this rude neighbourhood.

The man was robust and tall; and had a knotted staff in his hand, not of the most peaceable import. The woman's raven locks, waving in the wind, betrayed the class to which she belonged. At the

distance of many yards, she began to hail them; and they recognised the voice of Kate the gypsey.

"Hail to Squire Huntley, and the beautiful lady!" exclaimed Kate: "blessings on their heads; and wealth, and honour, and love, and pleasure, to their future days! May their bairns' bairns be as lovely as they are; and remember Kate and her tribe with kindness and protection!"

"God be wi' you, good gentleman and lady!" said the man, in a deep and strong voice: "well met in these ellinge hiding-haunts! help a poor broken-down man to a trifle to keep him from picking and stealing!"

Huntley and Alice each took the first piece of money from their pockets which they could reach, and gave it as a propitiatory offering to this fellow. He looked sternly at them both, as if discontented; when Kate immediately continued her address to them in terms more familiar and consoling.

"Dost thou think then that Kate, or Kate's companions, would hurt thee, Star of the Country, sweet Light of the woodlands, sent to irradiate the darksome and benighted savageness we are doomed to abide in? There wanders not the prowler, that dares to breathe harm to a hair of thy head! speak, Sim-o'-the-Dale, and pay your obeisance to the queen of beauty; and vow the protection of your brawney arm and oaken staff to her, while she honours these recesses with her presence!"

Sim-o'-the-Dale doffed his torn hat, and bending his knee, began to mutter several sentences of a gibberish as unintelligible as it was harsh. He had a patch over one eye, and seemed as if

> "He ne'er had comb'd his raven hair;
> Nor wash'd his visage in the stream."

His muscular knee appeared bare through his torn dress; and his broad shoulders seemed to lift the wallet at his back in

scorn. Alice shrunk from him, almost into the arms of Huntley, as he approached her still more closely; and as he leered with an affected reverence in her face.

"Keep off, Sim-o'-the-Dale!" cried Kate, authoritatively, "from approaching this sweet lady with your filthy rags; or ——"

"Or what, baggage?" answered Sim, with a countenance of thunder; and a voice that bespoke resentment and fury, vainly attempted to be concealed.

He recovered himself. "Thy name is Berkeley!" continued he, in a lower and more composed tone: "it is a noble name! I have served with thy father, and thy brothers, in better days. I have been wounded, and suffered grievous wrongs; but I am yet neither old, nor decrepit. It glads my half-darkened sight, to behold so fair a scion of so lofty and generous a tree. Think, as that high tree has suffered by the lightning and the winds, it is more venerable in its

dismantlements, than in its most flourishing luxuriance!"

What answer could Alice make to this? It was strange: there was mystery in it, in some respects frightful; yet allayed by many pleasing sensations. She dared not look at this fierce and audacious forester: the sharp and fixed glare of his eye would not allow her to examine his countenance; or question in her mind his purpose.

Huntley was in nearly equal amaze. Had it not been for the presence of Kate, whom he had remembered a stroller about the country for some years; and of whom he had never heard any harm, he would have been still more uneasy. Sim's glances upon Alice were mixed with relaxing smiles: upon him they emitted unsparing malignity and defiance. He was not without crossing thoughts of dread that it was his intention to attempt, with Kate's assistance, to wrest Alice's person from him.

He put another piece of gold into Sim's hand; and then giving Kate a look almost of entreaty, thanked Sim for his good wishes: and saying, that if he could be of service in the hour of need, a trifle should not be wanting, touched Alice's arm, and tripped off with her as fast as he could. The legs of both trembled under them; for many yards they did not utter a word; nor even look behind them.

Huntley distinctly heard mutterings from Sim, which seemed like curses: and tones of voice more soothing from Kate, as if dissuading him.

When they seemed to be at length safe beyond the reach of this alarming pair, Alice would have asked Huntley what all this could mean, but that an inexplicable fear withheld her.

When she had at length entered the house of Mr. Scudamore, and found herself safe in her own apartment, she gave way to her tears. Exhausted with fatigue

and agitation, she with difficulty recovered sufficient strength to come down to dinner.

Huntley received her with a sort of tender, yet almost silent interest, as if something had occurred which had linked them mutually in a mysterious fate, distinct from the rest of the world.

Scudamore, who had heard with some astonishment his fluent eloquence on the former day, was now equally struck with his profound pensiveness and frequent abstraction.

Alice was pale, and complained of the head-ache, which the morning-walk had given her. They both avoided, as if instinctively, to say any thing about the gypsies.

CHAP. VII.

MR. BROWNE, A GUEST AT SCUDAMORE'S.

MR. SCUDAMORE announced, on the following morning, that Mr. Browne, a friend of his, was expected to dinner; and requested the ladies to prepare themselves to entertain a man who had seen much of the world; and knew how to estimate manners and acquirements. The aunt bridled up; and the niece expressed her satisfaction by a simper.

When the dinner-hour arrived, Mr. Browne was introduced. He was a man whose address was prepossessing and easy; and whose person was commanding. He was tall, and perhaps stouter than was consistent with elegance; but he seemed to be already verging towards forty; and bore the marks of service over one of his

eyes; where a severe scar exhibited a long-closed wound.

At dinner, the conversation was general, and equally divided; as if the stranger shunned to assume too much to himself. He paid deference to Huntley: he showed no unequal attention to the beauty of Alice. As the evening advanced, his conversation grew more animated, and sometimes more particular.

He had lived in courts as well as in camps. He knew every thing about almost every one in the kingdom, who had any name. His mode of relating anecdotes was concise, pointed, and admirable. His remarks were yet sometimes a little too much allied to irony. He had been in Raleigh's last expedition; and he related some curious circumstances which occurred in that doubtful voyage. He spoke of Raleigh with wonder for his talents and venturous spirit; but not with friendship and approbation.

He was familiar with some of the wits,

as well as with the courtiers and swords-men of the age. He spoke of *William Browne*, the pastoral poet, as his cousin; and was fond of dilating on the magnificence of *Cowdray* and the Box Groves of *Betchworth*. He had passed days, in successive summers, with *Lord Pembroke*, at *Wilton*, where he had met *Ben Jonson*; and old *Chapman*; and *Francis Davison*; and *Nicholas Breton*; and the old *Countess* of *Pembroke*; and *Lady Mary Wrothe*; and many others. And thence was in the custom of moving with his friend and namesake, the rural bard, to *Lord Zouche's*, at *Bramshill*, near *Hertford-Bridge*, where they spent a week in their way to Cowdray and Betchworth.

He had, when a very young man, sailed in the last adventure with *George Clifford, Earl of Cumberland*, whose amiable and imprudent character he drew with impressive eloquence; and whose embarrassments, mortifications, and regrets, operating upon a proud, gallant,

and generous heart, he described in a manner which filled Huntley with alternate emulation and grief, and drew tears from the lovely eyes of Alice. When he added that the gallant Earl was a poet, as well as an explorer of new worlds on this material globe, through tempestuous oceans, at a period when the science of navigation was but slightly advanced; and, when to prove it, he repeated some elegant songs, composed with all the airy tenderness of *Marlow* and *Breton*, the illustrious peer's memory became consecrated among the listeners to the narration.

Browne was a perfect man of the world: he well knew what use to make of his stores; and just in proportion as he had pleased, to economise his strength. Languor always follows high excitement; and to oppress with pleasure is the worst of all possible managements. He stayed his hand, or rather his lips, therefore;

and was more silent the rest of the evening.

Huntley, during this over-copiousness of talk, had felt within himself, by fits, several qualms of mortification; but his generous temper, and the current of noble thoughts which the matter presented to him, and infused through his mind, had suppressed them as quickly as they rose. Once or twice, indeed, he thought that Alice also listened with something more of delight than was quite pleasing to him.

Browne now encouraged Huntley to take his turn in entertaining the company; but Huntley felt himself flat and overcome. He seized the first opportunity to place himself by Alice; but Alice also was silent, and almost dull.

Music was then introduced, and Alice sung; but she sung faintly and diffidently. Her voice was melodious; but it wanted strength; it was plaintive, even to sameness.

In the interval of night, both Huntley

and Alice reflected on the singular character of Browne with some wonder; and a great deal of curiosity. To Alice it appeared too fierce, and had something too much of art in it: she was not satisfied with the pliancy and suppleness of his reflections, and the ease with which his mind seemed to reconcile itself to every violence he related, and to all the more doubtful points of morality. She said to herself, "he may be pleasant, but I could not trust myself with such a man."

Huntley, in turning over soberly all which had passed, was still more strongly impressed with an unfavourable opinion. He was sure that, in the polish Browne had received, he had retained little of fixed principles. It was clear that he had led a life of adventure; and, as Huntley suspected, of unrelenting violence. He was a man of pleasure; a voluptuary of the most dangerous kind; and one who seemed to act as if he thought all human

nature actuated by a system of delusion, and therefore that artifice and selfishness were nothing more than a necessary protection.

When Huntley the next morning endeavoured to enquire the history of this man from Scudamore, the old man resented the enquiry as an affront; as if he would receive guests not fit for the society of his friends.. "He has told you his family," said he, "and you can have no difficulty to extract his history and character from himself."

There was now a coldness in Huntley's manner towards Browne, which was not unperceived by him; but which he affected to return by a disarming sort of good humour. To Alice he endeavoured to conceal, by the most skilful politeness, the strong admiration which he certainly felt. It was till the return of the dinner-hour, that he reserved the artillery with which he had been so successful on the preceding day.

At that hour he began gradually and cautiously to open the rich storehouse of his faculties. He knew not, or affected not to know, in what family Huntley had been brought up. He began with some account of the death of Henry, Prince of Wales; and of the persons most in his favour. He let out a great deal of secret history, true or false; and mixed much more of satire and scandal than he had done on the day before. This involved a very vivid and somewhat appalling description of the factions into which the court was divided; and the relative power and pretensions of the different great families in the kingdom. The families of Berkeley, of Hardingville, and Grey of Wye, he first touched upon only incidentally, and as if to try his ground.

He now hinted, that the Berkeleys had falled victims to a piece of treachery which he was not at liberty to disclose. He praised them with an extravagance, which seemed almost like fulsome flat-

tery; and different from the sagacious and qualified tone of compliment which he generally adopted. It was always also artfully set off by a witty contrast with some other family, whom he did not name, but whom he sometimes described in terms of ridicule, and sometimes of anger.

"Miss Berkeley," he said, "I remember your father in the prime of his manhood; and a finer figure, or a more gallant spirit, the court or the kingdom could not produce. If clouds have come upon him, they are clouds engendered by virtue. The sun shall yet disperse them, and his name shall shine through them only with the greater splendor; while those who could convert them into fatal vapours, shall themselves go out offensively, and be forgotten." Alice coloured, then grew pale, and burst into tears. Huntley stared, and wondered, and knew not how to interpret this extraordinary, and rather indelicate, burst.

Browne's resources were not so easily exhausted; nor did a single failure of the effect intended at all discompose him. He knew how to relieve himself when the spell did not work, and instantly put Scudamore on some conversation on which he was sure that he would be copious, though neither eloquent nor entertaining. Scudamore would talk, as long as any one would listen to him, on the business of his youth, and on the wonderful exactness and economy of Lord Treasurer Burleigh, and of the inferior talents for business, of his successor, the poetical Lord Buckhurst.

This was exactly the string which Browne was desirous he should strike. Here Browne was at home, and here he could be eloquent without offence. He took the note up gently; he differed from the old man only by degrees, and the most cunning steps; he joined in the praise of Burleigh, but he brought forward his defects with an admirable irony, which

the old man could not penetrate; he then drew the brilliant qualities of *Dorset*: (for such, in the following reign, was the title of Buckhurt,) with so many pretended disparagements; so many false sneers at the evils of imagination; so many false panegyrics at the exclusive usefulness of a dull and laborious capacity; that while the old man chuckled at this excellent advocate for his opinions, Huntley and Alice each felt involuntary admiration at his ingenuity, the acuteness of his perceptions, and the happiness of his illustrations.

Browne, however, made some observation as to the obscurity of Burleigh's birth, which Scudamore was not willing to pass over. He denied in a way which led to a discussion of the few old feudal families then remaining among the nobility, and this again led to the Berkeleys and the Greys.

"It is grievous," said Browne, "how long an ancient quarrel remains in such

families! The hatred between your House and the Greys, Miss Berkeley, has existed for at least three hundred years: — ever since one of that family carried off a large slice of your property by marriage. I know the Greys well, their animosity remains undiminished; and they say, as Northumberland said of Salisbury, '*their bloods would not mingle in a bowl together!*' "

"O pray, Mr. Browne!" cried Alice, "spare this history of family hatred to us?"

Huntley's brows contracted, and he half rose from his chair; and then, with shaking hand, seized a glass, and filling it with water, drank it down.

Browne gave an unperceived look at Huntley, expressive of secret satisfaction; and went on to relate several anecdotes of the Greys of Wye. He spoke of them as a race more hardy than wise, more independent than useful, and as

little scrupulous in getting as in spending, as more fitted to a feudal than to a polished age, and better qualified for a province than for a court.

He praised Sir Ambrose Grey in terms; but every particular he related was unfavourable to him. He spoke of his profligacy, and of his numerous illegitimate children, and alluded to his alliance as that which every reputable and virtuous family would avoid.

Huntley could no longer bear this repetition of attacks.

" Mr. Browne," said he, in a voice half choaked by passion, " perhaps you do not know that Sir Ambrose Grey is my friend and my protector: and I cannot suffer this freedom to be taken with his name and his character!"

"Young gentleman," answered Browne, with an affectation of calm contempt; " I certainly did not know what you now tell me; but since it is so, I have cer-

tainly to beg your pardon. Yet, I think you are a little too hasty with me, as young men are apt to be with those of more experience. — Recall my words; almost every epithet I have used is praise. I have mentioned no facts, but such as are well known to be true; and, if the number of his progeny offends you, why, I am sorry for it."

Young as Huntley was, the coolness and sarcasm of this answer absolutely silenced him for the moment; but he vowed revenge in his heart. He dared not look at Alice; he felt humbled before her, yet was anxious she should not perceive the extent of his chagrin. Alice was not less hurt, less outraged in her own delicacy, or less sensible of the insult to Huntley.

Browne had succeeded in all he proposed, except in the effect of the flattery he intended for Alice. He did not exactly anticipate the rectitude of her mind, and

the purity of her feelings. But just in proportion to the difficulty he found in seducing her mind, was the zest of his admiration kindled.

When she appeared at the breakfast-table the next morning, the fever of the night had given an unusual bloom to her cheek. Her beauty, thus set off, was even radiant. Browne was all gentleness, all respectful attention, all elegant and winning courtesy.—But in vain. Alice was cold, forbidding, and even haughty.

When gentleness would not do, Browne resorted to raillery, and wit; but it was all the same. No sooner was Huntley out of the room, than he made him the subject of his unmerciful jests; which caused the sister and niece of Scudamore almost to burst their sides with laughing, but filled Alice with disgust and indignation. He spoke of Huntley as a stripling — a half-taught youth — an obscure dependent, without a name.

Alice's mind was now occupied with the horror of a duel between Browne and Huntley, which, she foresaw, could scarcely be avoided.

CHAP. VIII.

ALICE BERKELEY AND SIR AMBROSE GREY.

Alice, having endeavoured to calm the mind of Huntley, was glad to escape home to the Rectory the next morning. It required many days of quiet and silence to restore her mind to its usual state. Her heart, perhaps, could never be restored to the temperament it had formerly enjoyed. A thousand painful ideas, which might perhaps have vanished with her childhood, had been recalled to her memory; some things had been said soothing to her pride, but they came from a treacherous fountain; and other things she had heard about the Greys, which, though spitefully said of them, left a sting about her heart. With

these Greys, Huntley had been brought up; and they stood in the way of a thousand indistinct visions of the future, which she could not tear from her bosom.

The display of Browne's character put her out of humour with intellectual pre-eminence. He seemed to make such a depraved use of his talents, and his wonderful acquirements seemed so to debase, instead of elevating, his heart, that the tests of worth which she had hitherto adopted, seemed all to be shaken, and brought into doubt. Of all discoveries, that which takes from us the reliance on talent combined with virtue, as the passport to consideration and fame, is the most dreary and hopeless.

The Rector and his wife had been too retired in their habits, and too exclusively occupied in their pastoral duties, to have their minds sufficiently enlarged to give very profound advice on the general affairs of a bustling and intriguing world.

Their simplicity too often made the superior sagaciousness of Alice herself smile. If she had described to them the character of Browne, they could as little have comprehended it, as a new language. The Greys were a forbidden subject. Mrs. Barney inherited all the unchastized venom of the family hatred on that subject.

Perhaps all these conflicting difficulties served to impress every day more strongly the person and disposition of Huntley on Alice's heart. The contrasted image of Browne set it off with more attractions. Country solitude, thou art dangerous to the peace of the bosom which first begins to love! Thou strikest all its images more deeply; and furnishest the dangerous food, to which it delights to give itself up!

Alice had now no other pleasure than in her books and her walks. The winter was rapidly advancing; but the weather did not yet prevent her rambles towards

the forest, and her lingering on the stiles which overlooked the village of Hellingsley.

She had taken out her pocket-book, and was deeply contemplating a small sketch which Huntley had given her of his face, when she heard the tread of horses and the tongue of an hound, not far distant from her. She looked up, and saw three horsemen, apparently a gentleman and his huntsmen, with two or three couple of hounds coming across the fields towards her, unchecked by the stiles and fences, which they leaped with agility and grace. She quitted her seat and moved homewards; but they had soon overtaken her.

As they passed, a venerable-looking old man, dressed in all the picturesque appendages of an hunter of his day, addressed her with the politeness and civility of a well-bred courtier.

" Good morrow to you, sweet young lady!" he said, " the air is pleasant, and

the sun is mild, and the sky is beautiful; and I commend your taste for enjoying them! Such beauty as yours, like Spencer's *fair Una*, may traverse the woods and deserts in safety, and have the lion himself at your feet."

He smiled, and bowed; and through his grey locks and arched eye-brows appeared a most comely face and expressive eyes. There was something in his courteous looks and peculiar tones of voice, which irresistibly caught the attention of Alice, and overcame her fears. She returned the salute with one of her enchanting smiles, and with that dignified innocence, which disarms of rudeness even the profligate.

The old Man was charmed with her manner, and seemed anxious to prolong the conversation. Alice moved steadily homeward, while he rode by her side, tatling about hounds, and seasons, and fields, and woods and villages. She had not gone a great way, when from the di-

rection she took, he guessed whither she was bent. He still accompanied her, paying a thousand old-fashioned compliments to her beauty, and talking in a strain of familiarity, which his age rendered not inconsistent with decorum. Alice thought she had never met with an old man so attractive in his manners, of so pleasing a countenance, and so delightful in the tones of his voice. That he was a man of rank, could admit of no question; but she continued, as she walked, to puzzle herself in guessing his name. She would have supposed it to be *Sir Ambrose Grey*, but that the idea she had formed of *him*, was that of a ferocious, hard, stern-looking man.

Again the benevolent beams of his countenance came over her, and the tones of his mellow voice pressed upon her ear like enchantment.

They came within sight of the rectory. The stranger told her it was now time to take his leave: he dismounted from his

horse, he took her hand with the respect of a Knight of Chivalry; imprinted on it a kiss, and bowing, said, with energy: "Adieu, lovely Lady of the Woods; and remember, it is *Sir Ambrose Grey* who pays his obeisance to the beauty and gentleness of a *Berkeley.*"

Alice's face and heart glowed with pleasure at this unexpected compliment. It had the strange effect of composing, and putting to rest, many uneasy sensations and doubts, of which she could but indistinctly point out, even to herself, the sources; but which yet sat like heavy clouds on her spirits and her hopes.

She skipped into the house, threw off her walking-dress, and sat down, forgetful of all around her, to indulge in the luxury of her feelings. The remaining hours of the day passed over her, silently and rapidly, as if moving on the wings of doves.

The next day she could reason a little more clearly, "What is this gossip of

the world ?" said she to herself. "What is reputation, but a feather, tossed about backwards and forwards by every contrary wind, the sport of envy, and malice, and interest, and folly, and ignorance; and childhood, not guided even by a semblance of truth, and wearing colours directly contrary to its professions? Sir Ambrose Grey has been described to me as a monster of violence and savageness. Never did I behold a more polished, a more attractive, a more noble-looking old man. The deep yet smooth tone of his voice yet vibrates on my senses. There is a benevolence in his fine-featured and benevolent countenance, which I shall never forget. He must have been in youth, what Huntley is now, though taller, and somewhat darker. Whence could all these misrepresentations arise? I hope they flowed not from the long-cherished dislike of the House of Berkeley. I should almost hate, and cast off my name, if I could

think so. Why should the races of Berkeley and of Grey thus quarrel, and agitate, and embitter blood, which once flowed from a common source? The new-sprung gentry, the mushrooms from the city, the law, the court, and from the spoils of abbeys, detest and malign them both. They have a common cause; and yet they are divided, as if to give overwhelming strength to their already too-powerful enemies. Shake hands, Grey and Berkeley! be candid and charitable to each others' faults: be united, and be happy! Yes, generous Sir Ambrose Grey, it seems it will not be *thy* fault, if it be otherwise. If thou die before me, I will heap fresh flowers upon thy grave, and moisten it with my tears: one Berkeley, at least, shall erase all animosity from her heart, and put kindness and reverence in its place!"

Alice now longed for an interview with Huntley, that she might talk of Sir Ambrose Grey, while her heart was over-

flowing. She knew that Browne had mortified him on this subject, and placed thorns in his bosom, which were wounding his pride, darkening his prospects, and aggravating his suspicions. She doubted if it had not put him out of humour with herself, from the fear of his having been lessened in her eyes.

Browne appeared to her to be wonderfully skilled in his use of instruments of mischief and disunion. To open again the ancient wound, which ages had made so inveterate; to touch the most diseased chord of irritation, to play off again a Berkeley against a Grey, was an act of diabolical ingenuity, becoming the perverted powers of Browne.

CHAP. IX.

FRESH INTERVIEWS WITH THE GYPSIES.

ALICE had now passed more than a week quietly at the Rectory, when Kate the gypsey, and her companion Sim, appeared at the back door. The latter was her terror; in the former she felt some interest, and almost reliance. Her bed-room window commanded the spot, at which they were garrulously engaged with the servants. Alice thought that she was unnoticed by Kate, but she deceived herself. Kate was as keen-eyed as an hawk, and as cunning as a politician. She began to tell the fortune of the simple servant-maid, by a prediction of many strange and ridiculous events; some of which were utterly unintelligible, but intermixed with occasional allusions to

Huntley: and these often in a raised voice, and with a peculiarity of expression and allusion, which made the colour come to Alice's cheeks, and filled her with an irresistible impulse to go down, and talk to Kate herself.

This was exactly what Kate wished, and intended to effect. "Bless your sweet eyes," said Kate, with her usual exclamation, as Alice approached: "why you are more beautiful than ever, and your cheeks are bloomier, and those eyes are brighter than the spangles of the dew-drops of a fine summer morning."

"Hush your nonsense," cried Alice, "or I shall run away without hearing any more of your silly gabble!"

"Oh but dear lady," continued Kate, "perhaps a pretty fortune to tell you, as well as to this bonny serving-girl here; and you may be sorry to lose the opportunity of hearing it: and when the girl has told you again, what I have told her, (as I am sure she will,) and Kate is far

away, you would give all the money in your pocket to have her back again, but then it will be too late."

By this time Sim had withdrawn; probably by Kate's direction, for one of the servants said afterwards, that she thought she heard Kate appoint him to meet her again at the bottom of the village.

Alice yet resolved to controul her curiosity; but still contrived to detain Kate, while, slowly and almost tremblingly, she turned over the contents of her basket. Amongst these was a BALLAD, called *Berkeley's Lament*, and a prose Story, entitled *Paladin and Rosetta*; in which the name of BERKELEY appeared conspicuous on almost every page to which she turned her eyes. She bought them both huddled up with a bundle of others.

Alice now, half-blushing, half-frightened, suffered her fortune to be told. She sent in the servants, closed the door upon them; and listened for a quarter of an hour to the fluent tongue of Kate,

who in many varied tones of voice, sometimes loud, and sometimes whispering, filled her mind with astonishment; and began almost to make her believe in magic.

Kate was certainly acquainted with many circumstances regarding her family, and even herself, which she had believed to be profound secrets; nay more, Kate was not utterly ignorant of some of the most hidden secrets of her bosom; but she did not open them with indelicacy; nor make Alice ashamed of that, of which she was conscious. If, on this occasion, Alice's mind did not utterly revolt at the belief in witchcraft and conjuration, let it be recollected, that at this æra *dæmonology* was defended by many of those, who had the most learning, and the best opportunities to be wise. Kate's intelligence was so extraordinary for her station in life; and her energy and power of language so accordant to her intelligence, that these had a great tendency

to increase Alice's suspicion of something supernatural.

Among other things, Kate gave her a charm, which she exhorted her to use in all cases of danger or interruption to her person. She could have said, as *Comus* exclaimed on a future day:

> " I know each lane, and every alley green,
> Dingle, or bushy dell, of these wild woods;
> And every bosky bourn from side to side,
> My daily walks, and ancient neighbourhood."

The charm was a little instrument, no bigger than a whistle, which, when applied to the lips, uttered a shrill and very singular sound. She said to her:

> " Keep it still!
> If you have this about you, 'gainst the threats
> Of dauntless hardihood, and brandish'd blade,
> You may lean safely. Do but touch the note;
> Through every lane and leafy labyrinth,
> Echo will bear the sound.
> Dumb things will then be heard to sympathise:
> No savage fierce, bandit, or mountaineer,
> Will dare to soil your virgin purity:
> Yea there, where very desolation dwells,
> By grots and caverns shagg'd with horrid shades,
> You may pass on with unblench'd majesty."

There was now something so earnest in the manner of Kate, accompanied even by tears, that it made all the impression on Alice which she wished. She also said so many kind things of Huntley, as not only secured the best piece of money Alice had in her pocket, but left Alice in the most cordial humour with her.

Alice was no sooner alone, than she was impatient to read the new purchases of *Berkeley's Lament*, and *Paladin and Rosetta*. She imagined in numerous parts of them a variety of circumstances which sympathised with her own. I had intended to give them here (for I have them in my collection), but I doubt if they would be as agreeable to the taste of the public as they are to mine, and I therefore withhold them.

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Walking was Alice's chief amusement. She delighted in the fragrance of trees,

and shrubs, and grass, and the produce of the earth; and she thought that her faculties were more active and powerful in the freshness of the open air. She really began to persuade herself she had obtained a protection against all evil or rude interruptions, in this charm given by Kate. Independent of any magical quality, the very sound it would make, must be some defence in the lonely ramblings to which she accustomed herself.

When therefore, some days afterwards, she saw a volume of smoke ascending from the wood-side, and as she approached nearer, saw a ragged tent, and sitting near it, the figures of Kate and Sim, it excited little alarm in her. She retreated however from the path she was pursuing, and thought it better to steer her course along the open meadows.

She had not crossed more than two stiles, when she thought she heard a rapid and strong footstep behind her. She

looked back, and saw Sim, the gipsey, almost upon her heels. Her charm was round her neck, and she was about to put it to her lips, when a bugle blew in the adjoining lane. Sim instantly appeared to drop upon the ground, and she thought she heard a rustling, as if he had thrown himself into the hedge adjoining the gate, which she had just reached. Whether he had any evil design, or only wished to embrace another opportunity of begging, she could not be confident.

Her alarms returned; and her doubts about Kate herself began to revive.

Alice's fancy now took a dangerous possession of her. The magic that seemed to beset her; the mysterious persecutions to which she appeared destined to be exposed; supernatural noises by night; gypsies by day; even strange and inexplicable allusions in the conversation of the few persons of her own station, into whose society she was thrown; a growing attachment to one whose origin

was a suspicious secret; the clouds that continued to gather more and more round her family; the uncertain future lot of her nearest relations; her father sinking under misfortunes; her brothers dispersed over the world; her sisters separated from her in a state of humiliating dependance!

The lovely scenes of nature seemed at length barred to her, when they alone could in any degree relieve the weight that pressed upon her heart.

Mr. Barney, though not quick in observation, was alarmed at Alice's altered looks. She became very pale; seldom spoke; and he saw tears continually rising in her eyes. He knew not the complicated causes of her melancholy feelings. He attributed them exclusively to the unfavourable intelligence that was continually arriving of her father's health, and decaying fortune.

CHAP. X.

HARDINGVILLE.

Sir Oliver Berkeley, oppressed by grief and difficulties, and weary of solitude, now resolved to recal the cheering society of his daughter Alice to *Hardingville.* Spacious and magnificent as this mansion once had been, it was now cold and melancholy from poverty, and dereliction, and want of repair. The splendid tales of other times were contrasted with present obscurity and neglect; and wounded pride and heart-breaking regret stalked through every apartment, or settled upon every picture.

The last step in the almost irrecoverable declension of the family fortune had been effected (as has been already mentioned), by a visit of Queen Elizabeth,

in one of her last progresses. Sir Oliver had long been soliciting a crown-grant of estates in the neighbourhood; and he dared not therefore decline this visit. The Queen came; it cost him many thousand pounds; but the grant was never thought of by the Queen any more.

Sir Oliver was not a man well-qualified to endure the odium and anxiety of a load of debt. His spirits were naturally high, his hopes romantic, his ambition adventurous, and his love of distinction lofty, though not insulting. He was more generous to spend, than cunning to get; ductile, credulous, and incapable of suspecting those deep and selfish designs in others, of which he was not conscious himself. Still hoping, "against hope," that the bright day would yet come; and plunging deeper, from year to year, into those nets which avarice, extortion, and dishonesty, are always preparing for the necessitous; he lost at

length, though it was long before he lost it, the elasticity of his mind.

There is a contagion in misfortune; "woes cluster," and one disappointment is sure to follow another. Every one is bold enough to add a blow to the fallen; every one may do the oppressed an injury or an insult, and yet not be afraid there will be a party to revenge the offence. Let what will happen, it will be deemed only one of the many disasters the sufferer has brought upon himself; his neighbours are reconciled to it; no one will pity, or make common cause with him.

The most malignant and dishonourable villain is often afraid to attack, when he knows the disgrace will recoil upon himself; where he is sure that his foe has friends and abettors at his back. But who will spare the friendless? and who will give assistance, except where it is not wanted?

Sir Oliver had foolishly flattered him-

self for many years, that his very name would have been a protection to him, and that a sort of charm, which had kept the estates so many ages in the family, would still have thrown off difficulties and mischances.

The style of building of the mansion of *Hardingville* has been already hinted at; and that it was rather that of a castellated house than of a castle, and that it resembled the celebrated relic of antiquity, *Haddon Hall, in Derbyshire.* But it was somewhat smaller. Some extracts from *King*'s description of Haddon* will give a more accurate and scientific account of the features of Hardingville than I can do.

This building was "castellated and embattled in all the apparent forms of regular defence, but really without the least means of resistance even in its original construction."—"The high turrets of the mansion stood proudly towering

* Archæologia, vi. 346.

on a rock, in the midst of thick woods, and in a most beautiful situation, looking down upon a river, which winds along the valley at a great depth beneath."

The passage through "a great arched gateway, led into a large square court, entirely surrounded by the apartments, and paved with flat stones. A second flight of steps to the great porch under a small tower, led to the skreen of the great hall; a room that most undoubtedly was originally considered as the only public dining-room for the Lord and his guests, and indeed, after them, for the whole family. At the upper end was the raised floor, where the table for the Lord and his principal guests was placed; and all along one side of the hall, and also over the skreens at the lower end, was a gallery supported by pillars, from whence, when the Lord and his company had retired to the apartments above, and the inferior part of the family had supplied their places, the courtly guests and their

hospitable hosts, occasionally beheld the revels, and might survey the jovial crew below; who, according to this distich,

> "Made it merry in the hall,
> When beards wagged all."

"From this great hall, at the upper end in the corner on the left hand, were two passages, one opening on the terraces in the garden, inviting the guests to refresh themselves, and the other leading to the grand staircase, and the principal apartments above.

"At the head of the great staircase, five or six enormous steps led to a fine long gallery, all wainscoted with oak, and the freeze adorned with heraldrical badges and devices." Beyond this gallery were various rooms, "all, except the gallery, hung with loose arras, and the doors concealed every where behind the hangings; so that the tapestry was to be lifted up to pass in or out."

With the exception of two or three private rooms for the occasional reception of the Lord and his family, "all the rest of this great pile of building was filled with small trifling apartments, forming a labyrinth almost as inextricable as that of Crete."

"The ancient garden of this great edifice was small, consisting entirely of terraces, placed one above another, each having a sort of stone balustrade. At the end of one of these terraces was an arbour; upon another a sort of small bowling-green; and from the lowermost, which ran along the side of the house, was a steep descent of some hundred steps, down to the river."

Such was this "odd mode of building, consisting of a vast awkward assemblage, of a prodigious number of small apartments, with few good ones for comfort or convenience, but with great provision for a noble display of hospitality."

The windows of the Hall of Hardingville blazed with heraldry, and the gallery was hung thick with portraits on pannel; and almost all with inscriptions, and arms, and implements; so that no member of the family long resident here, and who ever looked on these portraits, could be unacquainted with its history.

The Genealogical Tree hung, partly unrolled, at the upper end of this apartment. Near the trunk was a main branch, cut short off with *the shield of Grey*, marked by its BLUE BARS suspended to it; and the *silver crosslets on* the *red field* of *Berkeley*, quartered with the more ancient coat of its chief line, the *black bar* between the *martlets* on a *silver ground*. These, as if in scorn and arrogance, had been made to take precedence in the shield of the next generation, over the *blue bars* and *silver field* of GREY.

Alice's mother had long sunk beneath

the load of Sir Oliver's distresses, and was quiet in the grave. Instead, therefore, of cheerfulness and affectionate society, she found here thickening gloom and comfortless poverty. These memorials of ancient splendor were, in the present state of their affairs, rather aggravations of regret, and sources of bitter and unavailing imagination. Her brothers were all wandering over the world; perhaps, cursing their birth, and nearly destitute of support. One sister, who had been early introduced into court, in the hope of some lucky provision, was following the fitful fortunes of that dangerous and tempestuous climate; and from some unexplained cause, Alice had never been allowed to associate or correspond with her.

Sir Oliver himself, continually over-wearied by the stretch of repeated agitation, and suspense, and dread, yielded to something like excess in those indul-

gences by which, as Shenstone of late years said of Somerville, "torments of the body are incurred, to avoid the torments of the mind."

CHAP. XI.

SOLITUDE OF HARDINGVILLE.—SIM AT THE GATEWAY.

UNBROKEN solitude is not wholesome to the wounded mind. Alice would now have been glad to have seen again the face even of Kate, the gypsey, but not with her frightful companion, Sim. She sometimes sat in a bow-window, which overhung the rock and the deep river rushing through its wooded banks beneath it, and imagined to herself the shriek of the spirit of the waters, or the sighs which might be wafted on their bosom to her from Huntley. She would have committed her fate to him with the same confidence, and in the same language, as her favourite " *Nut-brown*

Maid," of which she could repeat every word with the most melodious pathos; and which she was now delighted to find, in its original black letter, in an old folio Chronicle * in the library of Hardingville.

One day in this lonely abode was too like another; no rays of light broke through the incumbent clouds. The wings of Melancholy were expanded over it far and wide; and Sir Oliver wanted the resources which belong to a mind deeply cultivated with literature, and the habits of forming that ideal creation, that is often a substitute for the hardness of the actual fate under which we are suffering. Sir Oliver's early life had been too exclusively a course of bodily activity, for the acquisition of these powers. He was pleased with the appearance of them in his daughter Alice; and listened to her, not

* Arnold's Chronicle.

without tears of pleasure, mixed with sorrow and alarm.

The keepers of the park, the woodmen, and the shepherds, were almost the only human figures she saw from her windows. In a dark, moist, warm morning, at the end of November, the song of a young female voice, apparently from the steep steps on the outside of the entrance gate, attracted Alice's attention. She ran to the arch-way, and ascending by a narrow newel stair-case to a room over it, of which the projecting large window overhung the steps, she saw three figures, consisting of two females and a male, all of the gypsey character.

The youngest female, from whom the voice came, seemed to be that of a girl of sixteen, with pretty regular features, but with the usual raven hair and walnut-coloured skin; the old woman was a tall, shrivelled, thin, frightful, hag. The man's face she could not catch; but by his height and peculiar figure, she

knew him too well to be her tormentor, Sim.

The servants were talking to them through the little door of the massive gates with caution and suspicion, according to rules, which the affairs of Sir Oliver rendered indispensable towards strangers; for the myrmidons of the law had been too often busy with his person, and had resorted to every species of disguise and stratagem to effect their purposes. Sim had told a long and dolorous tale, which had not hitherto exactly answered his views, and he now began to be importunate. This very importunity increased the suspicion of him; and the servants began to threaten, and he began to mutter curses. At intervals, the girl kept up the fascination of her songs, and darted among the men-servants the allurement of her wicked eyes. The old hag was lavish of her fortunes, and her predictions to the

women, and of her bargains of toys, and ribbons, and ballads.

Sim's arm was supported by a sling, and bound by a rag deeply stained with blood. He said that, the day before, he had been the means of saving the life of a gallant young gentleman, who, being engaged in a duel with a man his superior in strength and skill, had been on the point of falling by the aid of that man's foul play, when *he* came up, and interfered at the expence of the blood and injury he now exhibited. He said, that the antagonist then fled, and that *he himself* carried the youth, *badly wounded,* though alive, to a neighbouring cottage. He said that the aggressor was a gentleman well known, and celebrated for his daring feats of arms; and he believed that he was called *Browne.* He hinted, that jealousy was the cause of this violence.

At a distance from the mansion, in the Park of Hardingville, was a large bowl-

ing-green, with a summer-house adjoining, supported by walls built round it, like a sort of hanging-garden. The windows of this building commanded a noble prospect. Here Sim hinted that the young gentleman had been concealed several days, in hopes of meeting the object of his affections; and that Browne, finding him out here, the rencontre which had ended so dangerously had then taken place.

He said that he himself had looked in at the window of the summer-house, and had seen the floor scattered over with papers of torn writing.

Alice overheard part of this story with deadly consternation. She knew that, true or false, the parties, of whom this tale was reported, could be no other than Browne and Huntley. She would have darted out to the summer-house at once, but she was frightfully suspicious of Sim; and it crossed her mind, that this was only a trap to draw her into his

snares. She dared not disclose her fears, or take any one with her, because, if her father should know that she encouraged Huntley, a young man brought up and protected by the Greys of Wye, not all his subdued spirits, not all his affection for her, would prevent his pronouncing his curses and interdictions upon such an unnatural alliance.

The tale was told with so much art, yet with so many improbabilities, as far as regarded the summer-house, where the servants thought no one could have been so concealed, totally unknown to those who were so constantly traversing the Park, that suspicion of Sim was now augmented rather than allayed. Sim's fluent and superior language added to the doubts. The confidential butler appeared; he was confident that, under these assumed rags, he spied a rascally and treacherous bailiff, about to put his unhallowed hands on his persecuted master. They were ordered to quit the

premises; they hesitated and remonstrated. The call of the constable, and the terror of the stocks, were threatened. The girl turned pale, and trembled; and the old hag muttered and pronounced evil on the heads of all the Berkeleys; Sim growled and cursed, and bid defiance.

A man was now actually dismissed for the constable. Presently a shrill whistle was heard from a wooded bank, on the opposite side of the road that crossed the front of the mansion. Sim, with his companions, now descended the steps with an affectation of leisurely defiance; when, getting within the close hedges of the road, they were seen to separate, and rapidly move off in opposite directions.

Alice was so overcome with this account, notwithstanding she had strong doubts of its truth, that she took to her bed, and for many days was confined with an alarming fever. The quiet pre-

scribed for her, saved her from hearing a hundred exaggerated relations to which this extraordinary story gave rise.

As soon as she grew well enough to think for herself, she was desirous to send a confidential servant to ascertain if any wounded person had been really brought to any neighbouring cottage: and if the summer-house really exhibited any of those torn papers of which Sim had spoken.

But she could find no one in whom she could put this trust. She could not bear that the papers, if such there were, should be seen by any unhallowed eye; perhaps her name might be scribbled on some of them; perhaps they might contain sentiments which she would die to have communicated to any but herself. Even if a cottage, so inhabited, could be found, what might be the consequences, if her father should discover that that inhabitant was Huntley?

CHAP. XII.

STROLLING HARPER.

ALICE, notwithstanding her terrors of Sim, resolved, the moment she should gain strength for a walk, to go herself to visit the summer-house, and to enquire into the circumstances of all the surrounding cottages. A fair day had encouraged her actually to cross the outer court for this purpose, in her passage to the gate-way, when a throng of servants round the entrance, and the sound of an harp, accompanied by the tones of a low mellow voice, made her pause, and then retreat.

She listened on the steps of the inner porch, which led into the skreen of the hall; but she could catch nothing distinctly. She called to a favourite maid, and asked her what was going forward.

"O, madam," said the girl, "the sweetest music that you ever heard. It makes my heart melt and ache to listen to it; the words are so full of love, and the tune is so tender, and then it comes from such a beautiful pair of lips, and such noble-looking eyes, that I never saw the like! Not from any of your decrepid old fellows, with grey locks and a long beard, and tattered old clothes, such as we have often seen come about at Christmas-tide; but young, and handsome, and nimble, and courteous. O sure, dear Lady Alice, it must be a prince or an earl in disguise."

Alice smiled; but her smile was not the smile of ease and pleasure; it was the smile of mysterious trembling, and heart-ache. Mysteries seemed always to possess her; her mind was perpetually kept on the rack. She would have gone to the gateway, but her courage failed her; she would have ascended again to the projecting window over it, but a

sinking and dread warned her that her mind was not yet sufficiently composed to endure any new shock to which it might expose her.

She sent back the girl, and told her to come again with a second report, while she herself sat waiting on the steps of one of the little staircases of the court. The girl staid much longer than suited the impatience of Alice's feelings. When she came, she related, with many exclamations of wonder and delight, all she had heard.

She said that the harper had been singing, or rather reciting, with the accompaniment of his harp, a long story, principally in praise of the *Berkeleys*, and their heroic actions, and their faithful loves. Alice sighed.

"Did the song say any thing of the Greys of Wye?"

"O yes, a great deal. It lamented the ungenerous quarrels and hatred of the two houses, and hoped the day was

soon approaching when it would be put an end to; and that future affection would be the warmer, to make amends for past animosities."

Alice turned pale; a tear started from her eye: she then said, in a hurried and faultering tone, "O, be sure, Beatrice, if he wishes to be admitted to sound his harp in the hall of Hardingville, not to touch that subject. You know, Beatrice, the name of *Grey of Wye* is one which my father will never hear without indignation."

Beatrice paused.

"O, that I will, dear Lady Alice," she exclaimed. "Get him in the great hall! Any thing to have him in the great hall! Such a sweet, divine creature! O dear, how it will sound in that loud echoing vaulted hall; and how all the old pictures will smile; and how all the old armour will ring again! I would not for the world miss hearing him in the great hall: no more would Sarah, nor Betty, nor

Molly, nor Tom, the groom, nor Sam, the keeper, nor Jem, the huntsman."

"Be quiet, Beatrice," replied Alice: "I must yet know more of this stranger before he can be admitted. We must always be upon our guard against stratagems. If my poor father should by my ———." The remainder of the sentence died on her lips, and it required two or three moments to recover her voice. "Tell me something more, then, of this harper, Beatrice. Can you recollect any thing else that he sung but this story of the Berkeleys?"

"Not distinctly," she said: "perhaps I may remember part of a verse or two."

She now repeated fragments of two or three songs, which Alice recognized. But there was one piece which had more particularly engaged her attention, and she attempted to give a whole stanza of it. She had never heard such sweet love-verses before. "It described a lady," she said, "with the most beautiful auburn-

locks, and blue veins circling through the fairest complexion, with such a bosom, and such blooming cheeks, and such a pretty figure, and such slender ancles, as I never saw in any one except yourself, Lady Alice. I am sure he must mean *you*. And then he told of some cruel fate that separated her lover from her, who was determined to die if he could not obtain her hand." Here she repeated a stanza, at which Alice involuntarily exclaimed, with a half scream, "Gracious heaven! spare me, Beatrice;" and then she said more faintly, "but bring him in, Beatrice. You may bring him into the hall. Yet stop; be sure you do not say it was by *my* order."

Beatrice skipped away delighted; and the harper was soon in the hall, surrounded by all the retainers of the house. Sir Oliver himself was induced to come to listen to him, encouraged by the account of the old butler, who told him

with what animation he had been singing the history of the Berkeleys.

The dress of this harper, though not splendid, betrayed not poverty. It was neat, and strikingly picturesque. He was young and graceful in his figure, and had a most expressive face; of an hue, however, more than commonly brown; and on a near inspection, both his eye-brows and his mustachios betrayed an artificial darkness.

When Sir Oliver entered, after a most reverential bow, he commenced a sort of preluding song, stating the sacredness of his occupation, when duly executed, and inspired by a real love of romantic and generous admiration of heroism and virtue. He then gave an eloquent and poetical account of the circumtances by which he himself had been thrown into this wandering course of life, and named many of the great houses at which he had been entertained, and the rewards he had received.

Finding that Sir Oliver listened to this prelude with smiles which proved his approbation, he grew bolder. He alluded with admirable skill to some well-known incidents of the Berkeley history, in which they most prided themselves; and dwelt upon the beauty of its females in the courts of the Tudors. He said, that the house of Hardingville had always been most generous patrons to the strains of the minstrel; and that the charming smiles of its ladies had fanned many of their compositions into a flame of immortality.

He now again reverted to himself: he said, that the harp with him was a passion; that, though not of ignoble blood, yet inheriting but a competence, he had, relying on the independent support of that competence, embraced an occupation, by which all the favourite pleasures of his mind might be most indulged and cultivated; and that, above all, the thrilling approbation of beauty, which

had so often honoured and inflamed his effusions, was in itself to him a sufficient reward.

Alice sat by herself in the gallery over the screen during the greater part of this animated prelude, and alternately glowed, and sighed, and sobbed almost aloud. Twilight was now coming on, and she descended into the hall, when less likely to be observed, and before the candles could betray the redness of her eyes. The harper's voice faltered as she glided up the hall; but no one perceived it except Alice.

He now changed his notes to softer strains; and, as if to relieve himself after violent exertion, sung two or three pastoral songs, not unfamiliar to Alice, but selected with a taste and congeniality to her own feelings too overwhelming to the present state of her spirits.

Alice now sent a message by Beatrice to the minstrel, requesting a particular song. The minstrel, whether by design

or accident, seemed not to be aware of the song pointed out. Beatrice brought back an unintelligible answer. Alice said, "I will go to him myself and explain it." She stepped up, and repeated the name of the song. The minstrel bowed, and struck his strings. The notes were wrong, and Alice repeated her explanation. "It is a French tune," she said, "and there are French words to it; but perhaps you do not understand French."

"I have travelled in France," said the minstrel, "and am not ignorant of the language."

Alice was confident that neither her father nor any one in the hall was acquainted with French, except the minstrel and herself. She now said to him in French, in a low tone, as if repeating the words of the song, "You must be aware, that I have known you from the moment that I ordered Beatrice to have you admitted into the hall. Your presence is to me a re-

vival from death: for that villain, Sim the gypsey, brought word that you had fallen, or at least was dangerously wounded, in a duel with Mr. Browne. But why this disguise? You agitate me beyond my strength. For God's sake make your escape from hence as soon as possible. Be assured every moment is pregnant with a danger, that may end in the irrecoverable disgrace and ruin of us both. I dare not say another word: — I must retire!"

"Meet me to-morrow, Alice," replied the harper, "near the great hollow oak on the south of the Park summer-house, and I will take the earliest opportunity to retreat from these walls!"

"I will, I will," replied Alice, and immediately stepped back to her seat in the hall.

The harper now sung the French song, without having awakened suspicion by this mysterious conversation with Alice. Sir Oliver next called for

The Ballad of the Berkeleys, and the harper could not refuse. He recited it with energy; but he grew exhausted before the close. Sir Oliver became animated, and bowed his head with gratitude; and sometimes grasped his sword as if the days of his glory were come back; and sometimes clapped his hands with delight and applause.

Alice, in the midst of her enjoyment, felt a consciousness of something like deceit towards her father, which pure, and generous, and affectionate as she was, embittered the overflowing cup of her pleasure.

The best and most animating wine the old cellars of Hardingville could afford was now offered to the fatigued and drooping minstrel. He drank off the exhilarating draught, and his eyes glowed again, and his fingers ran with fire across the strings of the harp. Alice waved her hand, and the notes died away into a tone of complaint.

The wind began to blow, and darkness to close in; and Sir Oliver in his gratitude sent the old butler to offer the minstrel an abode for the night. He shook his head, and, with many thanks, answered, he had other engagements, and must be far on his way to a distant spot, ere the dawn of to-morrow's light.

He now once more took the harp between his knees, and, touching a few melancholy notes, he sang a plaintive farewell, of which the following is the substance: —

"I must do the work that I have vowed to do. There is a fate which rules all our actions, and bids us go where duty, and not where pleasure, leads. The praise of the hero is delightful; but still more delightful the praise of beauty and the smile of love. Yet, delightful as they are, I can tear myself from them, to do the task that I have sworn to do.

"I wander through the pathless woods, and the winds of the forest often sing

through the chords of my harp. I am hungry, and tired, and without food or shelter; and the rain beats on my bosom, and the cold chills my limbs; yet I complain not. I perform my high destiny. I do the work that I have sworn to do.

"Envy, and jealousy, and prejudice, and defamation, surround me. Ignorance mocks at me, Folly laughs at me, the midnight murderer pursues my steps, yet I murmur not. I am constant at my task. I do the work that I have sworn to do.

"There is a joy in this fair scene of things, which the eye sees, and the hand touches; but there is a joy also, which neither the eye can see, nor the hand can touch. There is a world about us, which cannot be seen or touched, the world of the mind; the rich creation of invisible spirits, which obeys the poet's wand, and hovers round his harp. I fly from the luxuries which wealth can give, and the senses can feel. I perform my

high destiny. I do the work that I have sworn to do."

Alice, unable to conceal her emotion, ran out of the hall; and the harper retired, with the thanks of Sir Oliver, and the smiles and blessings of the women, who had all flocked round his harp.

CHAP. XIII.

MUTUAL PASSION OF ALICE AND HUNTLEY.—SORROWS OF ALICE, PERSONAL AND DOMESTIC.

ALICE made many vain efforts to keep her appointment with Huntley the following day, near the hollow oak. She had twice approached it, when the gypsey-girl, whom she had twice seen with Sim, started up from a bush adjoining it, and once burst into a sort of fit of loud and mocking laughter, which alarmed the delicacy, and agonized the heart, of Alice.

Fear added to the pain of her mingled sensations; she had no doubt that Sim was in the neighbourhood; which induced her, as the girl appeared once inclined to follow her, to apply to her lips the magic whistle given her by Kate, when the

girl turned round and ran like lightning, and dashed into one of the thickets.

Alice's heart was now torn with so many conflicting passions, and with such a frightful weight of uneasiness, that all the fortitude she could exert, all the duty she could call in aid, all the reasoning she could apply, were quite unequal to support her under the pressure, with any outward appearance of decent calmness. At times she wept, started, trembled, prayed, and muttered to herself; at other times she was lost in a most dreadful stupor. Her colour vanished, her cheeks became hollow, her strength failed.

Sir Oliver saw the alteration in her looks; but he guessed not the cause. He attributed it to the dulness of the house, and the melancholy contemplations on his own misfortunes, and the decay of the family. He knew that Alice was warmly alive to family pride,

and affectionately anxious for the welfare of every member of it.

She sighed to see Huntley, for the gratification of that affection which she perceived was growing into an unconquerable flame. But she was still more desirous to avoid the suspicion of a breach of promise to him. There was yet an anxiety paramount over both these. She was in terror for his personal safety. It was but too clear, that Sim the gypsey was hovering round the spot where Huntley had appointed to meet her; and she could not but dread, that he had some mischievous intentions.

More difficulties to get over, a greater variety of obstacles to the passion which was now consuming her soul, cannot well be imagined. But it seems the fate of the passion of love to grow more furious in proportion to the obstacles opposed to it.

The late interview she had had with Huntley, under all its disguise and re-

staint, had given new wings to that imagination, which exalted her lover in her eyes. The talents he had displayed in his assumed character, the fire of his fancy, the tenderness of his sentiments, the force and harmony of his language, all added to the irresistible power which he now possessed over her bosom.

Nor was Huntley less unhappy than Alice. He haunted the walks, and the open lawns, and the coverts of the Park. His harper's dress was laid aside; but sometimes like a peasant, and sometimes like a hunter, he strolled round the environs of Hardingville, yet could never catch a glimpse of Alice, except on the occasion when the gypsey-girl put her to flight. That little cunning, wanton girl, it is believed, had been set to watch him, and draw him into some stratagem; but Huntley suspected and avoided her; and it seemed as if she was by no means sure of her object in the disguise he wore.

Added to Alice's own sorrows, those of her father continued almost every day to multiply. His mortgagees were pressing most of his estates to a foreclosure; his simple-contract creditors were harassing him with actions; an hundred rascally attornies, such as live upon the blood of necessity, were let loose upon him at once: and when he was unable to pay the debts by themselves, expected him to pay them, with the addition of costs, which perhaps doubled them. A story of this kind is not a place in which to discuss the gross abuses of this branch of the law, or the impolicy and injustice of many of its provisions. It is only when those who make a system of fattening upon the abuses can find a victim, whose destroyed credit will protect them against the vengeance of universal clamour, that the full display of this evil is seen in all its turpitude and horrors. The vulture, who appears all candour and kindness to one who is not yet

marked out to the public eye to be hunted down, puts his beak and his talons with unhesitating and unrelenting ravenousness upon the unhappy prey, which has already been conceded by the public voice to ruin.

Such a prey was the slowly-yielding, but broken-hearted, Sir Oliver Berkeley. The vultures might hover round him, and no one would clamour them off. Besides, he had held his head high in the days of his prosperity; and he had given many a blow, and thrown many an upstart to the ground, long after his strength had been supposed to be exhausted. Newer names had started up, and wanted to be thought old, which the eclipsing light of Berkeley threw into obscurity. Not content with wealth, and titles, and station, got by intrigue, and suppleness, and dishonesty, in the harvest which followed the dissolution of monasteries, they now aspired to antiquity of descent, as well as to vastness

of property. — Get rid of Berkeley and Grey; — still better, if the triumph should be sweetened by making them the instruments of each other's destruction; and they might hold up their heads without a painful comparison, which was always at hand to confute their pretensions, and make their arrogance a matter of scorn and laughter.

Sir Oliver was not insensible of the concurrent operation of these causes in the progress of his downfall. Perhaps he did not see them in all those strong and ever-deepening colours, in which they would have appeared to those whose vivid intellectual powers had been heightened by perpetual and almost exclusive cultivation. To such minds the light is frequently too strong for action: they see too far, and too clearly, around them.

A portion of Sir Oliver's youth, spent in martial adventure and great bodily fatigue, and a rapid succession of material objects pressing upon and oc-

cupying his outward senses, made him less intense and acute in his reflections and feelings than the highest state of susceptibility would have rendered him. All those bewildered and dream-like trains of images, which beset genius in the excitement of misfortune or anxiety, were comparatively feeble in him, but still not without bitter pain.

He did not feel the spring of action drop impotently in his heart. He could face danger, and he could meet most of the ordinary routine of his domestic concerns with firmnes and self-possession. The weight of hovering care; the incessantly-returning thought of his children dispersed over the world, and contending with obstacles, and neglects, and injuries, partly, perhaps in consequence of his own imprudences or faults, though it sat heavy upon him, did not take to him so terrific and overwhelming a form, as to one whom Fancy and Meditation had almost entirely spiritualized.

He did not perpetually start from sleep, and see spectres of the absent beings of his affection vainly calling for aid, and dying unprotected and unheard, on a foreign land.

CHAP. XIV.

FALL FROM A HORSE.—EVILS WHICH OVERTAKE SIR OLIVER.

"What will Huntley think of me?" said Alice, "while I thus appear to break my word? what is he suffering? what dangers is he incurring? what watchfulness is he enduring?" She resolved to to mount her horse, that she might traverse a larger tract of country, and more easily escape from the gypsies, if pursued by them.

The morning dawned with a cloudy and doubtful light. Gusts of wind and heavy showers continually intervened before the middle of the day. Alice was an admirable horsewoman, and always, therefore, rode spirited animals. She ordered her favourite mare to the door,

and springing on the saddle, was soon out of sight of the towers of Hardingville.

The gentle air gave her spirits; the yellow coverings of the fields, the perfumes of the wooded lanes, the tawney leaves, that lay like carpets under the horse's feet, thrilled and animated her senses, and made her again feel existence a blessing, even in the midst of her deep uneasiness.

She had put her horse to a gentle canter along a close and entangled road, and was riding somewhat carelessly, lost in a delicious reverie, when a rustle, and a shout arose from the thicket of an adjoining dingle, and out leaped, shaking her raven locks, the young gypsey-girl, with her arms extended half across the narrow road. The horse started back, sprung to the opposite side, and turning rapidly round, Alice, off her guard, fell violently to the earth, and descending upon her head, lay senseless on the spot.

The gypsey-girl, with her companions, gathered round her; but almost before they had touched her, a more congenial succour was on the spot.

Huntley, who had been listening in a covert almost opposite, had heard and seen this dreadful accident, and sprung forward to fold the dying form of Alice in his arms. "Keep off," he said to the wretches, who in truth had been watching and way-laying him on this occasion: "pollute her not with your wicked and blasphemous touch!" And then looking on her pallid and dying face — "O, I know not what I say! Help! run! fly to Hardingville! fetch water! call the servants! send for her father! O God! what is to be done? She breathes! I implore you, help! — gratitude — money — protection, — all shall be at your service!"

The wretches grinned horribly a triumphant promise of aid. The gypsey-girl ran, Sim leered, and the old woman clamoured the air with her gibberish, while she affected the most officious aid.

In addition to Sim, there was another man of this party: a short, savage-looking, coarse-featured wretch, with a deep rough voice, and eyes that appeared to delight in cruelty, and to speak murder.

Alice continued insensible. She breathed; but her eye-lids remained closed, as if in death. The stranger-gypsey proposed to take an adjoining gate; and, placing her on it, to carry her back to Hardingville. Huntley consented to this scheme, and, each taking a corner, they thus proceeded slowly to the mansion. The intelligence had not preceded them to the house, for the gypsey-girl had never gone thither.

As they ascended the steps to the great gateway, the mournful charge was first perceived. The servants ran out, the women screamed, and Sir Oliver, hearing the alarm, ran frantic down the steps to look upon his dying daughter. He accompanied her into the hall, wringing his hands, and shrieking with despair.

The bearers now resigned their melancholy burden to the servants of the house. The old butler was not unmindful of the opportune assistance thus given, and offered refreshments and money to the motley group; to all but to Huntley. — With Huntley's superior figure, with his agonized countenance, with his broken voice, with his gentle and fearful enquiries, and his mysterious expressions, the venerable man was immediately struck; and said, "Sir, while I conduct these good people to the servants' hall, perhaps you will have the goodness to wait Sir Oliver's better leisure in the oak parlour, through the door, that leads cross yonder oriel."

Huntley sighed, and said, "he should be most anxious to wait, both that he might learn the fate of Miss Berkeley, and that he might give every consolation in his power to her amiable father. He related, briefly, the history of this alarming adventure, and the accidental meet-

ing of such a motley group as had brought her home.

The gypsey tribe now retired to the apartments better suited to their condition; where a luxurious repast was soon spread out for them. Huntley took possession of the parlour allotted to him, and then became almost frantic at the ignorance of Alice's fate in which he was left. The old butler soon came, and placed before him wine, and other refreshments. But his mind, not his body, wanted revival and consolation. Yet such were the circumstances of his case, that he dared not discover who he was, nor betray the extent of his anxiety.

At other moments of less deep alarm, he would have been struck with disgust, suspicion, and perhaps terror, at the extraordinary rencontre and conduct of these gypsies; and would have avoided, above all things, to have entered the abode of Hardingville in such company.

At any other time, and on less dis-

tressing occasions, such a group as that of these gypsies could never have found an unopposed entrance here. All other attentions were now swallowed up in grief at the fate of Alice. The whole household felt but one care; and Sir Oliver's sorrows were all merged in this.

Alice revived a little; but there was evidently at least a slight concussion of the brain. She spoke little, and incoherently; she knew not where she was, and, after a few wandering words, she instantly sunk back into a stupor.

Night was now coming on; the anxiety of Huntley, who had been left all this dreadful interval to his own solitary sufferings, became at last almost incontrolable. He heard Sir Oliver, as if distractedly, pacing up and down the gallery above: he heard too, as he thought, something like noisy merriment, and even uproar, from the servants' apartments. It occurred to him, that the gypsies might be displaying the effects of an unusual

hospitality. He listened, and he was confirmed in this idea.

He left the parlour, and traversing the outer court, came close to the window of the servants' hall. He saw the whole party crowding round the table: jugs were passing, and bowls were flowing, and Sim-o'-the-Dale was in all his glory. He roared out his songs, he showed his sleights of hand, he brandished his brawny arm, and he told his merry stories, while the old gypsey-woman gabbled out fortunes to all the maids.

The short gypsey-man said little, but leered, and listened; or expressed his approbation of Sim, by ejaculating short but tremendous oaths. His principal expertness seemed to consist in pledging the servants to the strong tankards of ale, which were rapidly circulating among them.

Huntley's heart sunk with horror at this base scene of forgetfulness, and hard-hearted self-indulgence. "Are these,"

said he, "Sir Oliver's faithful servants? Is this the love and veneration for Alice? O accursed human nature! O baseness of this our boasted divinity of soul!"

He looked, and listened again. The voice of every servant, male and even female, betrayed the effects of the draughts they had been swallowing. But the voice of every one of the gypsey-party was distinct, clear, and firm. "They are certainly jugglers," said he: "I really doubt if they do not practise the black art! — frightful mischief is surely brewing! — I feel a trembling coldness, which I cannot overcome, run through every vein! Much as I despise and abhor these wretches, they hold a spell over even me!"

The infatuated servants were now listening to them as enchanters. The gateway clock tolled loudly the ominous hour of *nine*; the night was dark, the air was still, and it flung its heavy strokes, deep and distinct, through all the courts, and over the circuit walls. At this warning,

the servants all rose from the table as if instinctively. Massy gates were heard moving on their hinges; bolts shooting, and locks turning. The gypsies sat on— the servants looked, but every one seemed afraid to speak.

Sim knew the mood he had brought them to; and what was the object of their anxious eyes. "It is woeful dark, masters!" said he: "can't you give us a lodging, at least in an out-house?"

"We dare not, lads," said a grey-headed man, "within-side the walls. Outside the drawbridge, is a shed in the Park, where you may pass the night."

Sim shook his head, but still his countenance wore an insinuating and intreating smile. "Good cheer and warm rooms of an evening, masters," said he, "and cold sheds, through which the wind pierces, for sleep at nights, are fearful odds. These benches before this fire, with a rug for our heads, and we are content! then joy be with you all; and

recovery and health for your young mistress, and peace and plenty to Sir Oliver, and prosperity and long life to the house of Hardingville!"

"Be it so then," answered the inebriated man: "in hospitality's cause, for once be the law of Hardingville broken! and good luck and happiness come of it!"

Huntley had quitted his post, for his former apartment, before this arrangement had taken place. Had he known it, perhaps, as a stranger himself, he could not have interfered to prevent it. But his mind was too full of Alice's danger, to dwell long on any other subject. The old Butler provided him a bed in a chamber, not remote from that of Alice. All night he heard the traverses of servants attending her room; and he listened to Sir Oliver's restless steps, and heard his broken groans, with sympathising and unutterable grief.

He once heard the wretched father exclaim, "Is not now the cup of my sor-

rows full? Can any thing yet remain behind in the tribe of human evils? Here then let me close my sorrows, and Alice and I will go to our long rest together!"

Huntley had waked at this moment out of a feverish slumber. Whether he had been dreaming of the misfortunes of Sir Oliver; or whether there was something of unusual presage of gloom in Sir Oliver's present exclamation, he felt those words of the unfortunate knight strike with the coldness of death upon his heart.

At the hour of eight, the following morning, Huntley was hanging over the solitary breakfast, which had been prepared for him, when Sir Oliver entered the room. His fine countenance, his noble figure, venerable in age and misfortune, filled Huntley with respect, pity, and love. There was something of a gleam of hope, which broke through the general dejection of his look. He extended his hand to Huntley: "Perhaps,"

he said, in a tremulous and scarcely distinct voice, "I may hail you, Sir, as the preserver of my daughter!"

Huntley, scarce trusting his lips, cried with suppressed eagerness, "then, Sir, I may trust that Miss Berkeley is revived."

"By God's blessing, and the assistance you gave," said Sir Oliver, "I think we may yet save her precious life."

After half an hour, during which the agitated minds of both kept up with difficulty even a broken conversation, Sir Oliver offered to show Huntley through the principal apartments of this once splendid mansion. At another time, Huntley would have enjoyed this view. At present, his mind was too deeply oppressed with various and indescribable sensations.

As they stood upon one of the back courts, the gypsey group, in eager conference with the servants at a distant corner, caught their eyes. Sir Oliver started,

but seemed to recollect himself: "Oh, those are the people," said he, "who assisted you in bringing my poor Alice home. I hope the servants have not forgot to reward them." They saw Sir Oliver; doffed their hats, and bowed to the ground.

"God bless your honour, Sir Oliver!" they exclaimed: "long life to your honour, and your sweet daughter, the lady Alice!" As they spoke these words, they continued to advance, bowing and curtsying; while Sir Oliver put his hand into his pocket for some pieces of money to throw to them.

Horror struck Huntley as he saw them approaching, but he knew not how to act. The daring eye of Sim met Huntley's; who thought he looked not merely threatening, but triumphant. The old woman prattled, the girl darted glances of cunning joy; while behind came the short man, more black, more gloomy, more expressive of a base kind of reserve.

Sim, in crouching attitude, now began a fulsome harangue to Sir Oliver. His colleague lingering at his heels, seemed to echo with his muttering lips, all he said. Sim advanced, bent his knee, and kissed the hem of Sir Oliver's cloak. The little man followed the example; then rising, he lifted his arm, clapped Sir Oliver on the shoulder, and cried with a grin of infernal malice, "Sir Oliver, the mask is off: the game is up! — Sir Oliver, *you are my prisoner!*"

"*Your* prisoner!" cried the knight, almost in a shriek.

"*Your* prisoner! treacherous and dastardly wretch!" repeated Huntley, ready to dart upon him with all his strength.

"Yes, *my* prisoner," continued the brute; while his whole countenance blazed with hellish joy: "*here* is my authority!" holding up a little shred of parchment; "'tis from the Sheriff of the county, and I arrest you in the Sheriff's name, Sir Oliver, for *five thousand pounds*, at

the suit of Jonathan Hodgely, citizen and draper of London."

"And *I* am come," said Sim, "as assistant to this worthy officer of the sheriff: and mind you, Mr. Jackanapes," (addressing himself to Huntley,) "if you think to attempt a rescue, as you seem by your motions to threaten, I will lay you by the heels in an instant; crush you between these brawny arms of mine, and make you howl till these vaunted castle walls shall ring again with your cries!"

Huntley was on the point of darting his whole strength on this tremendous wretch, when he recollected the situation, the age, and the sufferings of the unfortunate Sir Oliver. Turning his eyes on this sad victim of ill fate, he saw him overwhelmed by this unexpected crisis, which he had so long warded off by prudence and caution. Sir Oliver trembled; almost melted into tears; and then, from excessive agitation, sunk upon the ground.

The whole household had now gathered

round their old master. They enquired, wondered, shrieked, howled, wept. They knew that to their unfaithfulness this overwhelming misfortune was to be ascribed. They loaded these disguised visitants with reproaches: they drove the gypsey-women without the walls: they were about to lay violent hands on Sim himself, but he kept at bay, while the little black man vaunted his shred of parchment in defiance of all assaults.

Two or three hours of wailing, confusion, and inexpressible grief, were now passed by all the inhabitants of Hardingville. Sir Oliver's first alarm was followed by a frightful stupor. He wept not, he spoke not; he looked with fixed and haggard eyes, without seeming to notice any object. The black man stood over him in the apartment to which he was carried, like a vulture over his prey; while he exercised every act of dominion, and called for ale and wine, and all the luxuries of the table which the house

could produce, as if he was master of all Sir Oliver's property. Sim entered the room, or left it, as suited his pleasure, and stalked over the courts like an emperor in his palace.

While this was passing, Huntley felt such a conflict of passions as amounted to the most excruciating distraction. He taunted Sim with his occupation.

"Prowling gypsey," cried he, "thou wert a suspected outcast; but what was this to a bailiff's follower? Virtue, heroism, and pleasure!"

Sim's delight at the success of the scheme was such, that he could not be put out of humour. He smiled in calm contempt at these reproaches.

"Bailiff's follower by accident to-day," said he; "a free ranger of the woods again to-morrow."

"Off then, wretch!" cried Huntley.

"Time enough," answered he, "when all is safe with the old knight."

CHAP. XV.

SIR OLIVER IN THE KING'S BENCH, ATTENDED BY HUNTLEY.—ALICE LEFT INSENSIBLE OF IT AT HARDINGVILLE.—REFLECTIONS ON IMPRISONMENT FOR DEBT.

THE cruel bailiff would have removed Sir Oliver to the county prison immediately; but as his faculties seemed at present quite gone, and his body so feeble that he could not support himself, Huntley's remonstrances and threats so far intimidated the selfish wretch, that he forbore for two or three days carrying him off by force, while in a state insensible to what was passing.

Alice meanwhile, utterly ignorant of what had occurred, was slowly recovering from the stun of her fall. She enquired for her father, but was told that he was ill from the fright occasioned by her accident.

Huntley felt these complicated distresses utterly beyond any remedy, or even advice, which the resources of his mind could supply. He knew not Sir Oliver's immediate friends, or men of business; he could learn little from the servants, who seemed to have lost any understanding or knowledge they might ever have possessed, in the present overwhelming crisis of his affairs. It appeared as if Sir Oliver had for many years had little intercourse with his neighbours; he had shut himself up in his own grief, and communicated his difficulties to few or none. It was not an age for such men as Sir Oliver; the new families were rapidly gaining ground, and were in a combination to take advantage of any clouds which hung oppressively over the old. Sir Oliver had been too proud, and too impetuous to conciliate; and his ruin was a consummation which the peers, and knights, and squires of the county, devoutly wished for.

Huntley already had known much of this; and he was afraid, by applying in the wrong quarter, to aggravate the mischief, and uselessly to heap new mortifications on Sir Oliver and his family.

While thus rendered incapable, by conflicting anxieties, to take any decisive step, or form any plan of relief, the time elapsed which brought the patience of the bailiff to its limits. Sim had quitted Hardingville for his wonted pursuits: a regular follower of the bailiff had occupied his place, and Sir Oliver, still in a state of stupor, was dragged to the county prison. Huntley accompanied him, while Alice was still kept ignorant of her father's fate.

Detainers now multiplied upon this dreadful misfortune. Huntley learned the name of Sir Oliver's attorney, and wrote to him; but the claims had already accumulated to an extent which left little hopes of release, and a removal to the

King's Bench was deemed altogether the most eligible.

When Sir Oliver arrived at this sad habitation, his memory had begun a little to overcome the shock on which it had been wrecked. He was in a narrow, close, gloomy apartment, with naked walls, and small grated windows. The faithful Huntley was still by his side. Huntley looked in his face; he saw it convulsed. Then Sir Oliver vehemently cried, "Where am I? What do these grates mean? Alas, I am in a prison!" He instantly sunk back into a fit, from which he did not revive the remainder of the day.

Huntley laid him on the hard uncurtained bed in the corner of the room, and watched over him, till he began to fear that his own senses were about to desert him. The prison-attendants came backwards and forwards; but they seemed to care no more about Sir Oliver's sufferings than if he had been a beast

of prey. There was rather indeed a kind of insolent triumph, as they sarcastically pronounced the name of *Sir Oliver Berkeley*.

Huntley was not allowed to sleep in the prison; but he came and spent the whole of every day in Sir Oliver's room. He would have attempted to have amused Sir Oliver's mind; but Sir Oliver was sunk into a torpor which Huntley thought might, in the present state of affairs, be more desirable than one which would render him more alive to his fate. Huntley had now ample time and room for meditation, even to madness. His acute intellect turned itself to the laws, which could inflict a punishment of such multiplied horror on a fellow-being. He could not deny that there might be causes to justify it; but he was sure that those causes must be very powerful, and of a most paramount nature. On well-grounded accusation for great crimes, of which the probable punishment would

induce flight, imprisonment was necessary. But in civil matters, and more especially in matters of debtor and creditor, he could discover none but the most shallow, most selfish, and most disgusting reasons.

He could not be ignorant that, from the earliest times, some law of this kind had obtained in most of the civilized states of the world. He felt some weight in the authority of usages so long admitted. But though not lightly an advocate of novelty and of schemes of reform, he could not be such a bigot as to suppose that no amelioration could take place in human laws; and all the arguments by which this practice was defended appeared so open to confutation, that he could not control his indignant anger at those who would lend themselves to the continuance of so cruel and wicked a system.

It is said to be necessary for the protection of creditors, who part with their property. But have not those who choose

to be creditors the protection in their own hands? Is not this cession voluntary? Are they bound to do so, without receiving at the same moment its full value in exchange? But then it is said, that so large a profit could not be obtained; that credit is necessary for trade, because they who could give no credit would have no customers; and that, if not necessary, it is at least convenient, as it supplies the place of capital in trade. Do they forget that, if none could give credit (but at their own peril), all would be upon an equality with regard to customers? But, admitting the loss of all these advantages, and exaggerating their value as we will, ought they to be bought at such a price as the sacrifice of the personal liberty of a human being to the caprices, the vindictive passions, the avarice, or the frauds of another.

Who are the advocates for this system? The cold, cautious, selfish, miserly, dishonest grovellers after individual wealth!

Who are its victims? The thoughtless, the generous, the sanguine, the aspirants after public glory, the devotees to public utility! It is asserted that every man may keep himself out of debt; and that he must take the consequence therefore of falling into it. These are harsh assertions, and as inaccurate as they are harsh. Numerous are the persons, in the present state of society, whom human prudence cannot preserve from debt. Among the first of these are men of large landed estates (like Sir Oliver's) which they have inherited under a load of incumbrances. Suppose rents to fall, tenants to fail, expences of repairs to accumulate, or law costs to multiply, what earthly exertion, what self-denial, even to the barest subsistence, can save them from debt?

Does the creditor ever take these things into consideration in the pursuit of his remedies? He says, "My mortgagee's distress is nothing to *me*. His funds may

fail *him*, but *that* is nothing to *me*. *I* must have to his *last farthing*; and if that is not enough, I must have his *body*." Like Shylock, he will have *the bond, the bond*, and *nothing* will satisfy him *but the bond!* Is this a power to be trusted to the guilty and blood-thirsty heart of man?

All traders are habitually advocates for this system. They like to give credit, because they can charge exorbitantly for it; and they like the profit, and the protection into the bargain. With the lever of extortion which they thus possess, there are fearful odds against the debtor.

But it may be urged, that it is in every one's power to accept credit for the goods which he volunteers to receive: and therefore, that he incurs, with his eyes open, all the hazards attending the acceptance of it; but is not this, to task human prudence and forbearance far too heavily? Is it not to give the encouragement of the law to traps for the ruin of

the unsuspecting and the sanguine? In the nature of things, and without the aid of laws, the lender is always more in possession of himself; and the borrower is therefore always at the mercy of the lender! Yet every thing in legislation is most contrived to protect him who least wants protection!

England has always been reproached by the Continent as *a nation of shop-keepers*; that is, as setting too high a value on trade and commerce. — The reproach is too well founded.

They have always made too great a sacrifice of better things to this grand object. There are powerful reasons, why wealth derived from commerce should not be respected like wealth derived from the liberal professions. Inattention to this has, from the time of Sir Oliver and Huntley down to the present moment, been a growing evil. All financiers have indulged the trading interest at the expence of the permanent

property of the country, in consequence of the temporary expedients, in which that interest has assisted them.

But if credit is so necessary to trade, that it must be protected at any rate, why extend its consequences beyond trade? Let credit be given on such conditions for articles procured to trade with; but let credit be given to those not within the bankrupt laws, at the peril of the lender. Where credit is obtained by fraud, the existing laws provide for it, by classing it among criminal offences.

But notwithstanding the opinions of sages and moralists, what hope is there that an amendment of this part of the laws will ever be carried? Alas! too many of those who must be consenting parties to such an amendment, are deeply interested in the continuance of these afflicting abuses! Daily familiarity with these effects hardens even the kindest hearts; and when daily wealth flows

from them, it would be a sacrifice too sublime for the frailty of human nature.

Do they, who are so ready to inflict on their debtors the punishment of imprisonment, at all weigh in their minds the degree of the suffering, and the extent of the distresses, which they cause? To be shut from air and exercise, to be herded with the profligate and the outcast, to give colour for neglect and reproach, to be made an object for the finger of scorn, to be dragged away from the management of one's affairs when they most require one's presence, to be deprived of the means of obtaining a livelihood when personal exertion is most necessary to obtain it! How stupendous must be the crimes which deserve such horrible retribution as this!

Yet these are the inflictions which our laws permit to be daily imposed on the most amiable, the most generous, the most virtuous, the most accomplished, and the most enlightened of human

beings! The caprice, the wantonness, the treachery, the foul and guilty purposes, with which this power is perpetually made use of, is as great a stain on the character of man's heart as can be urged!

The rumour of Sir Oliver's destiny had early spread itself far and wide in the country round Hardingville. To relate the comments that were made, would sink the liberal and generous bosom into despondence.

CHAP. XVI.

ALICE JOINS HER FATHER IN PRISON.—HUNTLEY RETIRES, AND VISITS RICHARD GREY.

A month elapsed. The dreadful event was not yet communicated to Alice. Mr. and Mrs. Barney had been sent for, and were now nursing her at Hardingville. Sir Oliver, dumb with grief, passed the long days little sensible to his situation. To Huntley, the generous duty which he had undertaken to perform, was a more lively pain. It was not the less acute, when, in the few sentiments which broke out at long intervals from Sir Oliver, he perceived a rancour at the House of *Grey* to be uppermost in his heart. The dominion of early prejudices in this enfeebled state of his faculties, was now absolute. He attri-

buted to the rooted rivalry and hatred of the House of Wolstenholme, all of his present calamity, of which he was sensible.

Wounded almost to despair by this unhappy prepossession of Sir Oliver, which the derangement of his mind gave no hope that he should be able to dissipate, Huntley was impressed with the necessity of concealing his own connections and name. The policy of this became still more urgent, when he reflected, that to him, however innocently, might in truth be ascribed Sir Oliver's present condition. It was to meet an appointment with him, that Alice was riding, when her dangerous fall took place; and as the entry of the bailiff was effected by the consequences of that fall, to him, not unreasonably, might Sir Oliver's suspicions and reproaches attach.

Perverted as his feelings were, with regard to all which associated itself with the family of *Grey*, he would, if he

knew Huntley's history, assuredly ascribe this to treacherous design. Luckily for Huntley, the cloud which enveloped his faculties, suspended all curiosity; and he was content to behold a face which looked kindly on him, without enquiring whence he came, or why he took such an interest in his fate.

At length Alice's health became re-established, and Mr. and Mrs. Barney gradually unfolded to her the dreadful secret. Alice forgot her own sufferings in anxiety for her father; she would not wait an hour after the final disclosure, without commencing her journey to join him. Accompanied by her uncle and aunt, she was soon in the prison at her father's feet.

Mr. and Mrs. Barney now learned from Huntley the leading particulars of this affair. Huntley saw the propriety, even without a hint from the Barneys, of quitting his charge. Alice wept, when,

kissing her hand, he took his leave; but, at present, almost her whole soul was engrossed by thoughts of her father, and she had scarce a pang remaining for her lover.

Darkness and stagnation still arrested the faculties of Sir Oliver. He stared vacantly on his daughter; he knew neither her angel face nor her melting voice. She was convulsed, but he heard her not; the tears streamed in floods down her cheeks, but he saw them not. She prayed for death for her father and for herself, she wrung her distracted hands, she knelt, and then rose and traversed the room, and sobbed aloud, and muttered wildly to herself; yet Sir Oliver was insensible to all.

Alice was now scarcely more in possession of her intellect than her father of his. She could not think, and therefore could exert no judgment in the mode of treating him. A little relief was afforded by the

exertions of Mr. and Mrs. Barney, in procuring a somewhat bigger apartment, with a closet large enough to contain a couch for Alice. Here she vowed to remain, till her father could quit it with her.

Huntley, not knowing whither to betake himself, being unwilling, in the present distress, to return to Wolstenholme, resolved to embrace the opportunity of paying a visit to *Richard Grey*, another brother of Sir Ambrose.

Richard Grey had many of the family features and qualities; but he wanted the vigour of some of them, and the softness of others. He was calm and polite, but too cold and insensible. More of a courtier than a soldier, more of a country-gentleman than a courtier, he lived in his retirement upon a very moderate income, without glory or shame. Exact in his accounts, the dupe of no man, the victim of no wild hopes, he put nothing to hazard; and firmly squaring

his expences by his means, he passed his days without disquietude; and if he knew no great joys, was secure against many of the ordinary calamities which afflict life.

He had so long accustomed himself to habits the reverse of those of the castle of Wolstenholme, that his visits there were short, and a matter rather of affection and of duty, than of pleasure. Their schemes of ambition he deemed unsolid, their vanities not worth the price, and a certain game of chance, played to retain their station of life, to which his sober understanding and practice of clear and precise calculation could not reconcile themselves. He was a man fitted, not to get, but to retain: in short, one of those common-place men, who do very well to fill up the ranks of life; but not suited to act from public views for the public.

Huntley was received by him with civility; but the absence of that cordial

warmth which soothes and encourages a wounded spirit, added to the restraint and silence which his uneasiness imposed. A small manorial house, the hall filled with all the implements and all the spoils of the chase, was his abode. In the little parlour, the windows dark with heavy stone mullions, and the boughs of honeysuckles, lay *The Book of St. Albans*, Turberville's Book *On Hawking and Hunting*, and several of *Gervase Markham's Tracts*. A roll of genealogy, pendant from the ceiling to the floor, suspended against the oak wainscot, was not wanting; and the *blue bars* on the *silver field*, quartered with the *red maunch* on the *golden ground*, were conspicuous in every part of it. *Here* Richard Grey, tame as his mind was, had an imagination capable of being inflamed, and a vanity easily set at work.

In this retreat, Huntley learned from his host several particulars of the family,

told in a mixture of pride, humour, and sarcasm, which he had never before heard hinted. In these conversations he was exposed to repeated shocks, on the most tender of all subjects, by the apparently relentless inveteracy, which every circumstance disclosed, to the House of Hardingville. Seldom dared he interpose a word to soften these prejudices. He exercised his ingenuity to devise some mode for this purpose. The ridicule or the condemnation of the new families was a favourite topic; the means of their rise, the base exercise of their power, their lying pedigrees, their insulting ostentation, their enjoyment of favouritism, the high titles which they purchased with their ill-got money, were all unwearying subjects of discussion to Richard Grey; and all might lead, as Huntley thought, remotely at least, to his prime object.

The dissolution of monasteries had been the harvest for the fortunes of new

men. The sudden and great increase of commerce, which followed the removal of the shackles of the feudal system, had enabled numbers of others to emerge from another low class into the higher orders. Of both these sorts, several now laid the foundations of their immense property so wide and deep, that, from that day to the present, they have formed a body, whose power in the state, both from titles and territories, has enabled them to be supreme over one of the three great branches of the political machine. It would be invidious to mention names; but so it certainly is. They now look upon themselves as among the most ancient, as well as among the most powerful, and would feel not a little surprised as well as mortified to have that claim disputed.

The forfeitures during conflicts of the Houses of York and Lancaster, "the waves and weathers of time," and other

circumstances, had at that time concurred to diminish the splendour and weaken the importance of most of the truly ancient and noble families. This was much the case with those of Neville, Percy, Clifford, Clinton, Talbot, Vere, Hastings, Berkeley, Grey, and Courtenay. The Tudors were oppressors of the old nobility. Queen Elizabeth is said, indeed, to have been fond of them; but this I doubt. She liked Essex from personal attachment.

But this upstart insolence was not confined to those who now attained new nobility. Others of the same sort, a little less fortunate and a little less rich, were laying the foundations for future elevation over the old stocks; and future pretensions of the same false and offensive nature.

Huntley inflamed these prejudices, not altogether unjust, against the *new* families, that he might impress upon his host the necessity of cordiality and union of

the old, as in a common cause, against them. Now and then he imagined the clouds of hatred and rivalry a little to give way.

CHAP. XVII.

SIR OLIVER'S LIBERATION, AND RETURN TO HARDINGVILLE. — ALICE'S RENEWED VISIT TO BARNEY'S PARSONAGE.

Several meetings of the creditors of Sir Oliver now took place. The state of his affairs was minutely discussed, and the alarming crisis of his health was anxiously considered. Sir Oliver's sufferings formed no part of the matter by which their future line of conduct was to be guided. It was to be determined by a balance of probabilities between the results of imprisonment operating on human misery, and the increased funds flowing from the prolongation of life. Avarice and self-interest make the most stupid acute; it is evident that death

would close all the best chances of these calculations; and death must soon terminate this blood-thirsty incarceration. All therefore declared for liberating Sir Oliver, on certain terms of surrender of income *beyond* what the law could give them.

In a few days therefore, after arrangements conformable to this resolution had been made, Sir Oliver was released. To him, it seemed a matter of indifference; he knew not where he was, nor whether he was going. Alice conducted him in mournful silence from his wretched abode; and felt at first that the air, and the sun, and the extrication from human misery, in rousing her from the dull insensibility of absolute despair, did but bring her back into the regions of overwhelming sentiment and agonizing reflection. Up to a certain point, hope attends us even in the utmost darkness of surrounding difficulties; we fear, but we still are not certain of the evils or dangers that we

dread. We think mankind are resentful, cruel, and unrelenting; but yet a ray of light, that it will be otherwise, breaks the gloom. When the death-like certainty is come, when the worst that we feared has happened, and all that we dimly hoped has past away, it seems but a renewal of inexpressible misery to be awakened to a sense of our situation. The mark is put upon us; the charm which threw off misfortune is gone, and the showers may pelt us, and the storm may lay us prostrate, and none will feel pity, because they are already reconciled to the spectacle.

Alice, during the long journey to Hardingville, had wearisome leisure for these reflections. A few tints of revival from the pale cast of approaching death began to cross the languid countenance of Sir Oliver. The free and balmy atmosphere, as they made their way deeper into the country, took something of feebleness from his tottering limbs, and

made the few words he spoke less inarticulate; but his memory showed hitherto scarce any trace of revival.

In the course of their progress through the intervening counties from the capital, they passed numerous castles and mansions, belonging to families whose history was familiar to Alice. Her heart sunk at the prosperity which they all seemed to enjoy compared to that of Hardingville. She said of many of them, "I know not the pretensions they have above us. They do not seem to be more intellectual, more ambitious, or more virtuous. I know that we have our numerous faults and weaknesses, but so have they. Some of them have risen by crime, and appear to have become permanent by stupidity. The serenity of apathy, the steadiness of a sensual content, the unprovoking good humour of dull indifference, have protected a youth of animal beauty and enjoyment, and an age of unenvied

peace. Territories and honours have increased upon them from generation to generation, and wealth and rank have given the worldly power and worldly happiness which neither genius, nor virtues, nor services, have been able to acquire. Poets, senators, statesmen, and heroes, blaze, and are gone. They leave but their names, and their spirits, behind them. The material proofs of their existence perish almost with themselves.*

At length the towers of Hardingville emerged from the woods under the setting sun. The breath of his native air seemed to give something of reviviscence to Sir Oliver. A faint gleam of intelligence appeared in his eye, and his voice was less feeble and indistinct. A month of peace in his own mansion, with the aid of Alice's soothing and incessant atten-

* Had Alice lived in later times, how completely might she have exemplified this in Spenser, Shakspeare, Bacon, Milton, Cowley, Newton, Pope, Thomson, Collins, Grey, Burke, Pitt, Fox, &c.!

tions, restored in some degree the facul-ties of his body and of his mind. But his pride was irreparably wounded, and poison was infused into his heart, which was sure, ere long, to gangrene and de-stroy it.

When once we lose our confidence in mankind; when we have damning proof that there is no friendship, no candour, no mercy, no regard to our sufferings, no respect for station in society, no re-membrance of past virtues or services, the sun ceases to cheer, and the first cloud that lowers fills us with unconquer-able despondence.

Though Sir Oliver's mental powers appeared in general to have recovered their sanity, he exhibited in his ideas oc-casional symptoms of aberration, which engaged the notice of Alice, and gave her the most acute pain. He discovered by numerous hints, that he suspected his late misfortunes to have been plotted by his ancient rivals, the noble family of

Grey. He did not seem to have any very distinct impression of the part that Huntley had acted; but the memory of his kindnesses was supplanted by the association in his thoughts of Huntley's entry at Hardingville in company with the bailiffs.

One portrait of a Grey was allowed to hang in the gallery, in consequence of some traditional act of favour received from him, contrasted with that of the house; and this had been a favourite picture of Sir Oliver; one of which he had been fond of praising the benign countenance and noble features. He now never turned his eyes upon it but in anger, and muttered at the same time something as if he had joined with it the remembrance of the person of Huntley. In truth there was an unaccountable likeness to Huntley in the form and expression of that face.

As the health of Sir Oliver revived, that of Alice began to give way.

Perpetual alarm for her father had made her hitherto forget herself: her spirits now almost entirely failed, and nothing was before her but an almost hopeless and indispersible gloom. She wrote to her aunt Barney, who discovering, by her feeble hand and desponding sentiments, her alarming state, made an immediate visit to Hardingville, and carried her back to the Rectory, where she might be nursed under her own immediate care.

All that attention and anxiety could do was done by Mrs. Barney; but she had not the attention or knowledge of the world to cure or comprehend the diseases of the mind. Her family pride was deeply wounded by Sir Oliver's misfortunes; but there was something little in all her remarks upon the subject; she never seized the true points of regret; there was none of that plaintive sentiment, which, while it mourns, throws a grandeur over adversity; which, while it

agitates and afflicts, in some degree, recompenses a noble pride. To live in sorrow; to contend with envy and malice; to be beset by sorrows and dangers, is the fate both of genius and of exalted blood. It is when we yield to the tempest; when we bend the head or the knee to oppression, that we become little, and mean, and degraded, and that our enemies gain the triumph over us: not because the arrows of misfortune are directed against us, and we are seen buffeting with the mightiness of surrounding waves.

If fancy be delusion, it is at least the source of real comfort. Grief, and the tribe of human evils, in all their nakedness, in all the frightfulness of their undisguised shapes; how are they to be supported by a sensitive and cultivated mind? The colours of fancy invest them in hues of indefinite sublimity, in which a sort of gloomy pleasure is mingled with pain.

The numerous painful realities which forced themselves on the thoughts of Alice, as often as she reflected on her situation, urged her to fly to the resources of imagination, as the only refuge for her wounded spirit. Whenever she could escape to solitude, she lived in a creation of her own. The gift of this high power is unquestionably a fearful endowment. It may be perverted; it may be difficult to reconcile it with the necessary duties of life; it may make its unavoidable roughnesses impossible to be endured; but there certainly are cases in which it is almost the only quality by which the troubles of existence can be soothed and deceived.

Alice had taught herself to believe, that though birth was often connected with the meanest qualities of the mind and the body; with sordid morals and grovelling passions; with barbarous ignorance and brutal manners; yet, in those

who were more happily endowed, by holding up the lustre of ancestry as a lamp to lead them forward, it tended as an incentive to the noblest sort of moral and intellectual ambition, and produced a superiority peculiar to itself, and unattainable by other applications of mental discipline. She had too much sagacity to be ignorant that such persuasions would meet the ridicule or scorn of the pretended philosophers of the world. She therefore kept these opinions to herself, as the sources of private comfort, and the secret guides of individual character.

As to herself, whatever she did, she did with so much warmth, that whatever she aspired to be, she was. In her, therefore, the success of her theory was exemplified; and she became exalted into a spiritual sort of being, whose expanse of imagery, and splendour of ideal circumstances, neither the narrowness of obscurity, nor the bonds of misfortune, could

limit or abridge. The children of prosperity, that sometimes, when in her walks she emerged upon the public roads, brushed by her in their gilded chariots or silver trappings, she smiled upon with a complaisance that threw off contempt and neglect, and turned the contrast of her own simplicity into eclipsing splendour.

With a mind thus irradiated, whose warmth had recalled her animal spirits, and given back health and new beauty to her frame, Alice had still many sources of profound uneasiness, or dangerous melancholy. Her father's sorrow was continually recurring to her; and a softer image of absent care was cherished with idolatrous meditation. A long interval had elapsed; yet nothing was seen or heard of Huntley.

Dark winter nights, when the wind howls, or the rain beats against the windows; or if it was still when the nightly

prowler's hollo, or the keeper's horn in the forest, impressed with awe the idea of the surrounding solitude, all conspired to cherish, and deepen a wild imagination.

CHAP. XVIII.

HUNTLEY BROUGHT WOUNDED TO THE RECTORY. — GYPSIES AGAIN.

ALAS! imagination is dangerous in proportion as it is powerful! If it adds to our pleasures,

> "It wraps the hour of woe in tenfold night."

Books could now be scarcely a resource to Alice. They fed propensities already too potent. Her intellectual faculties were already too much alive. Her sense of the absent and the future predominated too much over the realities around her.

In this state of high and morbid sensibility, she was one evening endeavouring to amuse her mind by one of those Stories of Fiction, best calculated by its fancy

and pathos to withdraw it from its own miseries, when a noise and scream of alarm was heard from the side-door, which opened to the kitchen. Alice, and Mr. and Mrs. Barney all rose, and rushed to the place whence the sounds came. A peasant, aided by the servants, was bearing in his arms the body of a young man, senseless and apparently dying. Blood was streaming from his mouth; and deep wounds appeared both on his head, and on his breast.

Alice could scarcely find courage to approach this mangled figure. A servant threw the light of the candle on his face. At that moment Alice's curiosity surmounted her horror. She looked; and a piercing shriek followed the glance. — It was Huntley!

The peasant had discovered him in this state, in the path of an adjoining field. He brought him to the nearest house; and that, luckily, was the rectory. He was conveyed to a chamber: a sur-

geon was sent for, his wounds were dressed, but he remained insensible. The surgeon pronounced it a very dangerous case, but not utterly hopeless. No one could guess how it arose.

Alice was so long before she recovered from the shock sufficiently to be sensible of what had occurred, that the next evening arrived before she could make any enquiries; and it was the third day before she had strength enough to visit his apartment.

A violent fever had at that time ensued from the wounds: and his senses were flying. The name of Alice continually murmured on his lips; and broken words, as if denouncing a disguised assassin; a fellow mighty in his body, but false and cowardly in his heart; one who struck in the dark, and tripped up heels when unseen; — seemed to point at the mode in which this dreadful attack had occurred.

Alice's conjectures were kept to her-

self; but they were strongly pointed to a particular quarter. Every attention that Alice could give the sufferer, consistent with delicacy, she gave him. Mr. and Mrs. Barney also bestowed on him all the care that benevolence could inspire. His wounds grew better; but his head seemed to have experienced a serious internal injury. A stupor was upon him; and, he knew nobody, and could give no account of any thing.

Meantime Alice, who spent most of her hours in solitude in her chamber, when she was watching Huntley, was roused one morning from the profound abstraction of her thoughts, by the sound below of the voice of Kate the gypsey.

Kate enquired for the young lady: and Alice even heard her own name pronounced. Kate had obtained a mysterious influence over her, which she could not control. She came down: her cheeks were pale, her eyes were red with tears. Kate seemed to catch the infec-

tion: her voice trembled, while she addressed her; and she addressed her in a tone of anxious enquiry, which went to the heart of Alice.

"How is the lovely one?" she commenced: "blessings on thee! and art thou in tears? blessed star of the forest! Tears! ah! indeed, let them flow gently; Fountain of Goodness, that refreshest all around thee with thy benignity! They are too precious to waste, nymph of pity! Yet shed them, as they are merited for him whom they will heal at last!" At these words the tears burst out, and rolled down Alice's cheeks. She would have concealed them, if she could. Even her feet refused their office to enable her to retire, as her offended delicacy would have prompted.

Kate went on: "Ah, hope, Lady Alice, hope! hope is sweet; and she will not delude such an angel-bosom as thine! There are spells in such sanctifying charms, as thine! The lame shall walk;

and the wounded shall be healed, and the dying shall rise, and the insensate shall put on again the glory, and brightness of mind!"

"O spare me! spare me! good Kate!" Alice exclaimed: "I am ill! very ill!"

"Would I hurt thy blessedness? lamp of the woodlands!" she answered: "would I make the blue meanders of those tender pulses give a single throb of pain? Would I cause that trembling bosom to heave one painful sigh? Soothe thyself, moon-beam of the heart's tumults! The waves around thee shall yield to the calm of thy fairy radiance! Thy looks shall spread peace; thy voice shall spirit away the demons of hell!"

Alice's heart could not refuse this flattery: a flash of light darted through her frame. "O, sure thou art a spirit thyself, Kate," she cried: "but thou can'st not be a bad one! Bad spirits never yet spoke in so kind a tone! Bad spirits never poured out such balm on the wounded

bosom!" Alice put her handkerchief to her face; and the tears again flowed even in torrents. A pause ensued: Alice's handkerchief was then withdrawn, and displayed a countenance calm again, and even half-arrayed in smiles.

Kate presumed to take Alice's hand: and gently opening the palm, cried: "I see it plain; the brave youth is better: is he not? Better he must be, if such an hand administers the cup of medicine! if such an eye beams its loveliness upon him!"

Alice struggled to withdraw her hand. "Ah, scowl not, sweetest! pout not, tender one! there is no taint in my touch, though it be sallow, and dark! there is no pest in my hair, though it be black as raven! there are no ill omens in my voice, though it may seem to croak! reject not my blessings: blight not my consoling tongue: doubt not my predictions: suspect not my wishes!"

Her countenance, hitherto benevolent,

blackened, like a gathering storm. Alice was alarmed; and instantly endeavoured to soothe her. She put her hand on Kate's shoulder, and said in a winning tone: "No, good Kate; mistake me not: I cannot reject the comfort thou holdest out!" She put her hand in her pocket, and drew out a small piece of gold.

"Put up thy gold, lady," exclaimed Kate; "put up thy gold: I want it not! Though a Berkeley, thou hast not too much thyself, lovely one! Be not angry, when I say so! frown not in pride, Rose of the woodlands! It becomes thee not; a Berkeley may survive the wreck of fortune. Its blood need not flow through golden channels. Its brightness may be in its purity; in the length of its course; in the winnowing of the blasts of time!"

"Good Kate!" Alice answered in half smiles, "whence did you get this high-flown language? Art thou a witch, Kate? Or do thy tribe indeed deal with spiritual acquaintances, as it is said they do?"

She spoke this in a tone so playful and gentle, that Kate took it, as it was meant, in kindness.

"When the night is still, and the blast is at rest, and the toil-tired clodhopper sleeps unconsciously in his hut, and the watch-dog bays the moon," cried Kate; "under the hedge, or under the rock; down in the dingle, or by the lone lodge, while the kettle boils over the greenwood flame; we con our lessons, and catch the voice of the spirits of the air. Hast thou not sometimes heard us, soft-beaming Lustre of Hardingville's towers? Did our swelling voices never steal on the breeze, through those mossy trembling towers, of a clear, silent, silver-crescented autumn night? Did it not come sweetly over the dell of Coberley's ruffets, from the side-hill of Brinkley knolls, and running along old Baldwin's valley, float with the tide across the foot of Rosamond's turret?"

"And is this then the life you lead, Kate?"

"Marry, it is: except when the blasts of winter bite! and a gay life at times it is; free as the air, and joyous as the birds of the woods, and the troops of the forests. But when frost and snow, and the drenching rain, and the piercing wind comes, and cold benumbs, and hunger pinches, then, sooth, we envy the snug roof, the hearth fire, the stored loaf, and the sheltered rug-wrapped bedstead! Yet even then, lovely one, even then we would not exchange our rude weather-pelted lot for stripes, and insults, and servility! See: has early care turned my raven locks to grey? Has it furrowed my cheeks, or dimmed the spirit of my eye?"

She instantly broke out into a wild song, in a voice of great natural power, and extraordinary mellowness.

Alice listened; and was pleased with the following words, betraying that su-

periority to the style of a mere gypsey's language, which the conversation just ended had already so strongly shown.

GYPSEY'S SONG.

Love in our eyes for ever laughs;
  Bathes in the spirit of the breeze:
Life from the limpid current quaffs;
  Then sleeps beneath luxuriant trees.

Folded in fond affection's arms,
  Our slumbers deep, and soft, and kind,
Are free from cankering care's alarms;
  Nor know the poisons of the mind.

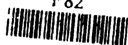
Beyond the reach of Fortune's ills,
  We bid defiance to her hate;
And courts while fraud, while malice fills,
  Ours only is the happy state.

The gladsome songs of birds awake
  Replenish'd Nature from its sleep;
The morning dews their perfumes shake,
  And in delight their senses steep.

We love, we walk, we run, we rest,
  As Nature bids, and Will inspires:
Ours is the sunshine of the breast;
  Ours is the joy of Nature's fires.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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